NEWS LESSON

Seventy Years in One Flat, Then an Eviction Notice



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes somewhere feel like home?
2. Would you rather have more space or feel settled in a neighbourhood?
3. Which local place would you miss most if you moved away?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**evicted**	☐	A	an agreement about how something will work
2	**arrangement**	☐	B	laws that limit how much rent can go up
3	**ownership**	☐	C	kept going with a plan even when others disagreed
4	**pressed ahead**	☐	D	the fact of owning something
5	**stretcher**	☐	E	shows clearly by giving an example
6	**supply**	☐	F	a light bed for carrying someone who is ill or hurt
7	**illustrates**	☐	G	the amount of something that is available
8	**rent controls**	☐	H	forced by law to leave a home

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Maricarmen Abascal was forced out of her Madrid home at 87. Her case has turned private worry about housing into public protest.

1 For more than seven decades, Maricarmen Abascal lived in the same Madrid flat. She had watched neighbours come and go and the city around her change. By the time she was 87, her home held most of the memories of her adult life. Yet in September 2026, after a long legal dispute over her rental agreement, she was evicted. Her case became a powerful symbol of Spain's growing anger over housing costs and tenants' rights.

2 Maricarmen lived in the Retiro area of Madrid under an older rental arrangement that gave her some protection from market prices. When ownership of the building changed, a legal struggle developed over whether she could remain. Housing campaigners and neighbours organised support, arguing that an elderly resident should not be forced from the only home she had known for so long. The owners pressed ahead with their legal claim, and the authorities eventually ordered an eviction.

3 On 23 September, police attended the building as protesters gathered outside. Maricarmen was removed on a stretcher and taken to hospital. She died on 7 October, having been seriously unwell. Her supporters believe the stress of the dispute made her illness worse. But nobody has shown that the eviction caused her death. An agreement that might have allowed her to return had reportedly been reached, but she never made it home.

4 The case attracted attention because millions of Spaniards recognise the fear behind it. Rents and purchase prices have climbed in many cities, while earnings have often failed to keep pace. Young workers can find themselves priced out of neighbourhoods where they grew up. Some continue living with family well into adulthood; others spend a large share of their income on a room in a shared flat. Popular tourist areas face additional pressure from short-term holiday rentals.

5 The argument over who is responsible quickly becomes political. Campaigners criticise property investment firms and call for stronger tenant protections, rent controls and more public housing. Landlords and other critics warn that strict rules may discourage people from renting out homes and argue that too little new housing is being built. Both sides claim that their approach would make the system fairer, but neither can offer a quick solution to years of rising demand and limited supply.

6 Maricarmen's death prompted further demonstrations, with supporters demanding changes in the law. Her story should not be reduced to a slogan: she was a person with a long life, a family and a home she wanted to keep. But the public response illustrates why housing debates have become so emotional. For those worried about losing their home, the issue is not an investment or an economic statistic. It is whether the place they belong can suddenly become somewhere they can no longer afford to stay.

Sources: ITV News. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Maricarmen's rental arrangement gave her some protection from market prices. T F NG
2. Doctors have shown that the eviction caused her death. T F NG
3. The owners offered Maricarmen another flat in Madrid. T F NG
4. Both campaigners and landlords believe their own approach would be fairer. T F NG
5. The article says a quick solution to the housing problem is available. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

authorities	discourage	dismiss	earnings	recognise	reportedly	slogan	tension

1. The local _____ have promised to review the rules on short-term rentals.
2. The company has _____ agreed to lower the rent, though nothing has been confirmed.
3. Most tenants _____ that repairs are necessary, but they disagree about who should pay.
4. Many young people spend half of their _____ on rent.
5. High taxes may _____ people from investing in new homes.
6. The campaign needed a short _____ that people could chant at demonstrations.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the new rules came in, many landlords already _____ their flats. (SELL)
2. Rent rules in several cities _____ by regional governments in recent years. (CHANGE)
3. Campaigners argue that nobody _____ to leave a lifelong home. (FORCE)
4. If rents _____ less quickly, fewer people would have to move away. (RISE)
5. The housing law _____ in parliament next week. (DISCUSS)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Check what follows the gap: a noun phrase, a full clause or a comma. Despite needs a noun phrase, whereas joins two clauses, and some words only work after a semicolon.

despite	nevertheless	otherwise	provided	therefore	unless	whereas

1. _____ rising rents, many young people still want to live in the city centre.
2. Tenants want longer contracts, _____ landlords prefer shorter ones.
3. Landlords say they will let fewer homes _____ the rules become more flexible.
4. The number of tourist flats has grown; _____ , fewer homes are left for residents.
5. Tenants must pay on time; _____ , the landlord can end the contract.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should matter when someone has rented the same home for decades?
2. What would make a neighbourhood easier to stay in as people grow older?
3. Should a city judge its success by how many people can afford to remain?

9 Role-play: a rent rise

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the landlord

You own a flat and your costs have gone up. You want to raise the rent by 10% from next month. Explain why. You can agree to a smaller rise if the tenant offers a longer contract.

Student B · the tenant

You've lived in your flat for six years and you love the area. Your landlord wants a rent rise that you can't afford. Ask for time and a fair deal, and say what you can offer.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk about the rent.
I've lived here for six years.
I'm afraid I can't afford that.
Would you consider a smaller rise?
We're willing to sign a longer contract.
That's fair, so let's agree on it.

Tell the class what you agreed and whether both sides were happy.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 A · 3 D · 4 C · 5 F · 6 G · 7 E · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 authorities · 2 reportedly · 3 recognise · 4 earnings · 5 discourage · 6 slogan

6 Verb forms

1 had sold · 2 have been changed · 3 should be forced · 4 rose · 5 will be discussed

7 Language focus

1 Despite · 2 whereas · 3 unless · 4 therefore · 5 otherwise

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