

Home Before Aid: The Political and Economic Case for Ending U.S. Homelessness Before Funding Foreign Interests

Jindra Samuels

Publication Date: 2025/07/21

Abstract: Despite being one of the wealthiest nations in the world, the United States continues to struggle with a severe homelessness crisis. As of 2023, more than 650,000 Americans experience homelessness on any given night. This thesis explores the economic feasibility and political implications of reallocating a small fraction of the United States' foreign aid budget to end domestic homelessness. Through comparative analysis, government data, and economic modeling, this study demonstrates that financial capacity is not the barrier to ending homelessness—political will is. With just a fraction of the funds currently spent overseas, the U.S. could provide permanent housing, mental health services, and employment support for every unhoused citizen. This work calls for a fundamental reassessment of national priorities to bring our most vulnerable neighbors home.

How to Cite: Jindra Samuels (2025) Home Before Aid: The Political and Economic Case for Ending U.S. Homelessness Before Funding Foreign Interests. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(7), 1346-1347. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jul818>

I. INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is not a new problem in the United States, but it remains an unresolved one. The juxtaposition of American wealth and widespread homelessness raises serious questions about national priorities and fiscal responsibility. In 2023, the U.S. government allocated over \$50 billion to foreign aid while homelessness persisted in nearly every urban and rural community. This thesis posits that the economic and logistical means to end homelessness already exist; the lack of action reflects a misalignment of values, not a shortage of resources. This paper explores how reprioritizing even a portion of U.S. foreign spending could fundamentally reshape domestic policy and restore dignity to the nation's most marginalized populations.

II. THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), over 650,000 individuals were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2023. This number includes people sleeping in shelters, transitional housing, or in places not meant for habitation. The primary drivers of homelessness include a lack of affordable housing, mental illness, substance use disorders, and systemic poverty. The problem disproportionately affects veterans, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those exiting incarceration or foster care. Despite numerous pilot programs and local

interventions, the national approach to homelessness remains fragmented and underfunded.

III. THE U.S. FOREIGN AID BUDGET

The United States is the largest donor of foreign aid in the world, spending over \$50 billion annually to support development, humanitarian relief, and military operations abroad (USAID, 2023). While international assistance serves strategic and humanitarian purposes, it draws critical resources away from urgent domestic issues such as homelessness. For example, in 2022, the U.S. provided \$3.3 billion to Israel and over \$5 billion to Ukraine. These contributions, while significant on the global stage, often eclipse the federal funding allocated for homeless assistance programs. The imbalance highlights a misalignment between global ambitions and domestic responsibilities.

IV. WHAT IT WOULD COST TO END HOMELESSNESS

Experts estimate that ending homelessness in the U.S. would require an annual investment of \$20–30 billion (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). This investment would cover permanent supportive housing, emergency shelter expansions, mental health services, and employment training programs. When compared to the \$50+ billion foreign aid budget, this amount represents less than 60% of what the U.S. spends internationally each year. Moreover, housing the

homeless reduces downstream costs in emergency room visits, policing, and incarceration. Numerous studies show that Housing First initiatives result in long-term savings for municipalities and improved health outcomes for participants.

V. POLITICAL BARRIERS AND PRIORITIZATION

Despite evidence that homelessness is solvable, political inertia and ideological divisions continue to hinder progress. Many lawmakers prioritize foreign aid due to diplomatic ties, defense interests, and pressure from international allies. Meanwhile, homelessness remains stigmatized and politicized, often blamed on personal failure rather than systemic causes. Public misunderstanding about the cost and efficacy of housing solutions also contributes to resistance. Yet, polling suggests broad public support for increasing domestic spending on housing and mental health, signaling an opportunity for political leadership to pivot toward homegrown solutions.

VI. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical dilemma is simple yet profound: Should a nation prioritize international aid while its own citizens sleep on sidewalks? Critics argue that charity begins at home and that a wealthy nation has a moral obligation to care for its own before extending resources abroad. From a human rights perspective, access to housing is a fundamental need that intersects with health, dignity, and safety. Ignoring domestic suffering in favor of foreign diplomacy undermines national integrity and violates the social contract that governments are tasked with upholding.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

To effectively address homelessness, the United States must reevaluate its fiscal priorities and reallocate a small portion of foreign aid to domestic housing initiatives. This could include expanding the Housing First model nationally, funding wraparound mental health and addiction services, and offering targeted assistance to vulnerable populations. Policymakers must also work to destigmatize homelessness through education and reform. Solving homelessness is not only possible—it's fiscally responsible, politically feasible, and ethically necessary. America has the resources; what it needs now is the resolve.

REFERENCES

- [1]. National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2022). Ending homelessness: A comprehensive approach. <https://endhomelessness.org>
- [2]. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2023). 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report. <https://www.huduser.gov>
- [3]. United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2023). Foreign assistance data. <https://foreignassistance.gov>