Assignment on

Liabilities and Duties of Landlord and Tenant

Submitted by:

Aqib Javed

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Prof. MS. Khadija Ahmad

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Liabilities and Duties of Landlord and Tenant Under Rented Premises Acts

Introduction

Residential tenancy, governed by specific Rented Premises Acts (also known as Residential Tenancies Acts or Landlord-Tenant Laws), is a contractual relationship defined by the exchange of property use for rent. These acts exist to protect both parties and ensure dwelling units are safe and habitable. This assignment analyzes the fundamental duties (what each party must do) and liabilities (legal consequences for failing to perform a duty) imposed on landlords and tenants.

Duties and Liabilities of the Landlord

The landlord's primary duties center on providing a fit and livable property and respecting the tenant's right to occupy it peacefully.

Core Duties of the Landlord

Duty to Provide Habitable Premises (Implied Warranty of Habitability):

The landlord must ensure the property is safe and suitable for human habitation at the start of the tenancy and throughout its duration. This includes providing essential services and maintaining fundamental components:

Functional utilities (running water, heat, electricity).

Structural soundness (walls, roof, foundation).

Freedom from major pest infestations and environmental hazards (e.g., severe mold).

Compliance with local building and housing codes.

Duty of Quiet Enjoyment:

The tenant has the right to live in the rented premises undisturbed. The landlord must not interfere with the tenant's reasonable use of the property. This involves:

Refraining from excessive or unannounced entry (typically requiring 24 hours' written notice, except in emergencies).

Ensuring other tenants or the landlord's actions do not create unreasonable noise or disruption.

Duty to Repair and Maintain Major Systems:

The landlord is responsible for all repairs that affect the habitability or structure of the premises, including:

Roof leaks, exterior maintenance, and structural faults.

Repair and maintenance of major appliances provided with the unit (e.g., furnace, water heater, refrigerator).

Timely response to all repair requests, especially emergency repairs (e.g., lack of heat in winter).

A. Liabilities of the Landlord

Liabilities arise when the landlord breaches a core duty:

Liability for Breach of Warranty of Habitability: If the landlord fails to make critical repairs, the tenant may have legal recourse, including:

"Repair and Deduct": In some jurisdictions, the tenant may perform the necessary repair themselves and deduct the reasonable cost from the next rent payment (after giving the landlord notice and time to fix the issue).

Withholding Rent: Placing rent in an escrow account until the issue is fixed.

Constructive Eviction: If the property becomes legally uninhabitable, the tenant may be entitled to terminate the lease without penalty.

Liability for Improper Entry or Harassment:

Breaching the covenant of quiet enjoyment can lead to civil penalties, compensation payments to the tenant, or injunctions preventing further interference.

Liability for Unlawful Eviction (Retaliatory Action):

The landlord is liable if they attempt to terminate a tenancy or raise rent in retaliation for the tenant lawfully exercising their rights (e.g., requesting essential repairs or joining a tenant union).

II. Duties and Liabilities of the Tenant

The tenant's duties center on respecting the property and the lease agreement.

A. Core Duties of the Tenant

Duty to Pay Rent on Time:

This is the most fundamental duty. Rent must be paid in full on the due date specified in the tenancy agreement.

Duty to Maintain Reasonable Cleanliness and Sanitation:

The tenant must keep the premises clean and sanitary, preventing conditions that could encourage vermin or damage the unit (e.g., maintaining ventilation to prevent mold, disposing of garbage properly).

Duty to Avoid Waste and Damage:

The tenant must use the property in a reasonable way and avoid causing damage beyond "normal wear and tear."

Normal Wear and Tear includes minor scuffs, fading paint, and worn carpet, which the landlord covers.

Damage includes broken windows, holes in walls, or major appliance breakage due to misuse, which the tenant is liable for.

Duty to Promptly Report Defects:

The tenant has a duty to inform the landlord immediately of any major defects or conditions that affect the structural integrity or habitability of the property (e.g., a burst pipe, a non-functional furnace).

Duty to Provide Reasonable Access:

The tenant must grant the landlord or their agents access for inspections, repairs, and showings, provided the landlord gives proper legal notice.

B. Liabilities of the Tenant

Liabilities arise when the tenant breaches the rental agreement or their statutory duties:

Liability for Non-Payment of Rent:

This is the most common breach. The primary liability is eviction. The landlord may issue a notice to pay rent or quit, and if unpaid, pursue eviction proceedings and seek recovery of all outstanding rent and legal costs.

Liability for Excessive Damage (Waste):

The tenant is liable for the cost of repairing damage caused by their negligence or deliberate acts, their guests, or their pets. This cost is typically deducted from the security deposit, and if it exceeds the deposit, the landlord may sue for the difference.

Liability for Breach of Lease Terms:

The tenant is liable for breach of specific clauses, such as subletting without permission, using the property for an illegal purpose, or violating pet policies, which can result in lease termination and eviction.

Conclusion

Rented Premises Acts establish a critical framework for balancing rights. The landlord is primarily responsible for the structural integrity and habitability of the property, bearing the liability for fundamental failures (e.g., lack of essential heat or water). Conversely, the tenant is fundamentally responsible for timely rent payment, cleanliness, and avoiding destructive waste, bearing the liability for damages and non-compliance. The effective functioning of any tenancy relies on both parties fulfilling their statutory duties and utilizing legal remedies when a liability arises.