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Massive rallies across Portugal demand affordable and dignified housing

written by Peoples Dispatch

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Housing rights groups and left-wing parties in Portugal have been calling on the government to institute rent caps and fund social housing. They have also opposed the housing program introduced by the government



Mobilization in Porto. Photo: via Home to Live Manifestation

On April 1, major rallies were staged across Portugal demanding policies to tackle the housing crisis. Rallies were held in the cities of Lisbon, Porto, Viseu, Aveiro, Coimbra, and Braga under the banner of the coalition “Home to Live In.” Activists from various groups including *Habita*, Stop Evictions, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), and Left Bloc (BE) participated in the actions.

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa [launched](#) #MaisHabitação (More Housing) on March 31, a program to promote affordable rents, strengthen confidence in the rental market, and utilize already existing units for housing purposes. Yet, housing rights activists [denounced](#) the program as a Trojan Horse that will use the public budget to subsidize speculative incomes. Activists have demanded a ceiling on rents and property prices, more funds for social housing, increased wages and an end to evictions.

The Stop Evictions collective has said that over 20,000 people have taken part in mobilizations across the country, involving the participation of around 100 organizations. They also denounced police intimidation against demonstrators in Lisbon.



Mobilization in Lisbon Photo: Ana Mendes via esquerda.net

Cities across Portugal are facing an acute housing crisis marked by soaring rents and property prices, even as hundreds of thousands of houses remain unoccupied. According to the [registry](#) of the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics, there are around 723,215 empty houses in the country. Earlier in February this year, the Portuguese government unveiled its [plan](#), which includes suspending new licenses for Airbnbs in the country and ending golden visas for international home buyers. Leftist parties and housing rights groups have criticized the government for remaining silent on demands such as instituting a rent cap, expropriating unoccupied houses, taxing and controlling rent sharks and speculation in real estate,

and increasing investments in social housing.

On April 1, while addressing the housing mobilization in Lisbon, Catarina Martins from BE said that “The government tried to empty the demonstration with the More Housing package, but the people realized that this package is insufficient. We don’t want more tax breaks, we want to get rid of the existing ones, we want prices regulated, and people to have a salary to pay rent on. People don’t have to have aid to pay rent, because when the aid ends, people can’t afford their house.”

“There must be ceilings on rents, it is necessary that houses that are empty are available to people and above all it is necessary that houses have prices that people can afford. Considering the price of housing in Portugal as one of the biggest problems in the country” and that Lisbon “is one of the most expensive cities in the world taking into account wages,” she added.



Portuguese communists at the mobilization in Porto. Photo: PCP-Porto

On Saturday, Paulo Raimundo from the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) [stated](#) that “the housing problem is a central problem and the measures that the government has advanced have no implications in the lives of people”

These days, the Portuguese working class has been also organizing protests titled *Vida Justa* (Fair Life) to demand an increase in wages and pensions as well as better job security.

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

