

How do you quarantine without a home?

Fundamental measures for containment and protection in times of a Pandemic

At a time when the Portuguese government is trying to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, these containment measures will bring serious consequences to peoples' lives and the country's economy. We citizens, collectives and associations, demand that all measures taken to protect public health and social welfare must be accessible to the entire population and should pay special attention to the precarious workers and the impoverished.

Containment will have to be discussed in the near future according to different points of view and its intentions should be critically and deeply analyzed. We would like to stress that the national health system has been weakened by permanent austerity and in favor of privatization, thereby creating serious consequences to its function: the reduction in the number of beds in public hospitals, the precarious working conditions of health professionals and a huge lack of awareness and health education have meant that the national health system today lacks the basic capacity to respond to this pandemic. That is why it is fundamental that the whole population has the necessary conditions to protect itself. All people must have a safe house to live in with proper hygiene and basic infrastructures (water, light, gas and sanitation).

Today many people live on the street and in precarious or overcrowded housing because they have been evicted by the same governing authorities who now ask people to wash their hands, to quarantine and for the entire country to *protect itself*. To ensure that everyone has equal conditions, we demand:

- an immediate end to evictions;
- immediate resettlement of the already homeless people.
- the requisition of empty houses whether they are for the use of tourism, luxury or public apartments to be used for emergency re-housing.

In addition to the basic issues of access to adequate housing we must also prevent the economic burden from again being borne by the weakest section of the population in the form of loss of homes, work and new misery. In order to ensure that state support is not limited to businesses and major economic interests, for this temporary period we are demanding:

- the suspension of rent payments for all people affected by the crisis;
- the suspension of mortgage payments;
- the suspension of rents for social spaces, such as collectives and associations;

- the suspension of rents for small and medium businesses affected by the crisis;
- the physical protection of workers most exposed to the virus;
- the financial protection of all people with precarious work which are not currently protected by social security;

In the imminence of a new economic crisis, the basic living conditions should be guaranteed for all citizens. In times like this it's more important to prioritize peoples' interests above the interests of banks and financial speculation. The solution cannot be an aggressive model of debt, privatization and austerity like the ones applied in previous financial crises. Peoples' welfare should be above profit and the public welfare state should be above the private sector's interests. Houses, community services and hospitals should always serve the population and be saved from the voracity of finance, which is always ready to profit in crisis situations like the one we are heading to.

Original text in Portuguese can be found here: <https://habita.info/como-se-faz-quarentena-sem-casa-medidas-fundamentais-para-contencao-e-protecao-em-tempos-de-pandemia/>