

# Youth, workers in Portugal mobilize against cost of living, for right to housing

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30 October 2026

Throughout October, major protests have been taking place in Portugal, bringing together demands over the rising cost of living, wages, pensions and public services, as well as the right to housing and the struggle against evictions.

On October 2, public administration workers took part in a day of strikes and demonstrations to demand wage increases, professional recognition and changes to the performance evaluation system. The protests affected various public services. Throughout the month, further actions have also been called by education workers, non-teaching staff, employees of the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA), bank workers and other groups.

On October 10, the platform “Não dá mais para viver assim” (“We can’t go on living like this”) called demonstrations in Aveiro, Braga, Lisbon and Porto. On October 17, thousands of people once again took to the streets of Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra for a national day of action called by the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP), which demanded wage increases, better pensions and public services, and denounced rising housing, fuel and food prices.

At the same time, young people, students, precarious workers and families struggling with exorbitant rents were taking part in encampments for the right to housing. In Lisbon, protesters set up tents in Rossio Square, while in Porto they occupied D. João I Square. On October 20, the Public Security Police (PSP) simultaneously intervened in both squares and violently evicted the protesters who tried to resist. The operation resulted in 55 arrests. Far from bringing the protests to an end, the police crackdown sparked further mobilizations.

On Saturday, October 24, thousands of people took part in a new demonstration in Lisbon under the slogan “Não temos casa, montamos tendas!” (“We have no home, so we pitch tents!”). The protesters returned to the squares

and decided to resume the encampments in Lisbon and Porto. However, in the early hours of Sunday, October 25, the police once again cleared the square. Dozens of officers, some accompanied by police dogs, moved in to remove the tents, beating the protesters with batons. In Lisbon, 25 people were arrested and at least 20 protesters were taken to hospital. In Porto, six people were arrested, while organizers reported 37 injuries.

The young people leading the encampments have called for an Iberian general strike on November 11, coinciding with the strike called in Spain, to unite similar struggles in both countries against unaffordable rents and for wage and labour demands. Portugal’s major trade union confederations, the CGTP-IN and the UGT, are now seeking to deflect pressure to call such a strike. The CGTP has stated that it does not rule out a general strike but insists that it should not be called “precipitously” and that adequate preparation and the necessary conditions must be in place to ensure its success. The UGT, meanwhile, has remained silent on demand.

The mobilizations in Portugal are part of a wave of social unrest sweeping across Europe in protest against rising prices, stagnant wages, housing insecurity and the deterioration of public services, as governments prioritize fiscal discipline and military spending. Millions of young people and workers have taken to the streets in countries including France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Albania. The proposal for an Iberian general strike on November 11 points to the possibility of coordinating these struggles across national borders. However, for such a convergence to develop, it will have to overcome national divisions and the resistance of trade union leaderships to committing to a general mobilization.

Access to housing for young people and workers in Portugal has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible. Between 2015 and the end of 2025, house prices rose by approximately 182 percent, one of the

largest increases in the entire European Union. This surge has continued: in the first quarter of 2026, prices rose by 17.8 percent year-on-year, with second-hand homes recording an increase of 19.7 percent. Rents have also soared, particularly in Lisbon and Porto, where tourist demand, short-term rentals and property investment have contributed to rising housing costs. According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2021, 19 percent of homes were used as holiday accommodation, while 12 percent stood vacant.

Wages, however, have not kept pace with this increase. Over the past decade, they have risen by approximately 48 percent, meaning that house prices have increased almost four times faster than wages. Workers are finding it increasingly difficult to afford to buy a home and are having to devote a growing proportion of their earnings to rent. As a result, thousands of young people and working-class families are being forced to share accommodation. Housing, a basic social need, has thus become an investment asset whose price is moving ever further beyond the reach of those who depend on their labour for a living.

The Portuguese government of Luís Montenegro, from the right-wing Social Democratic Party (PSD), is now pushing through a reform of tenancy law that prioritizes the interests of landlords and the property market over the protection of tenants. The proposal abolishes the 2 percent cap on rent increases for new contracts and makes evictions easier.

The Socialist Party (PS), the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE) voted against the law, a stance that can be characterized as hypocritical and cynical in light of their political record. It was during the so-called *geringonça*—the parliamentary arrangement that allowed the PS to govern as a minority between 2015 and 2019 with the support of the BE and the PCP—that housing prices began their steep rise amid growing property speculation, while precarious employment and low wages persisted.

The PS remained committed to the European Union's austerity policies and the defence of private profitability, while the BE and the PCP sustained the government in parliament on the grounds that they could pressure it into adopting policies more favourable to workers. This support helped contain social opposition within the confines of parliamentary politics, allowing austerity and attacks on the working class to continue.

The PCP's own programme for the 2024 elections acknowledged that successive Socialist Party

governments had encouraged speculative investment by property funds and major landlords, while housing costs consumed an increasing share of household incomes. Nevertheless, neither the Left Bloc nor the PCP broke with their strategy of parliamentary support for the PS.

Both backed its budgets for years and withdrew their support only in 2021, when growing industrial unrest and opposition to the 2022 budget made their collaboration untenable. The right-wing government that took office in 2024 has continued the policies pursued by previous PS governments, which had enjoyed the parliamentary support of the PCP and the Left Bloc.

The mobilizations in Portugal and other European countries express a common crisis of capitalism, in which governments impose social cuts and precarious working conditions while devoting ever-increasing resources to militarism and war. To advance, workers and young people must overcome national borders and build rank-and-file action committees in workplaces, schools, universities and working-class neighbourhoods. These committees must be democratically elected and controlled by those taking part in the struggle, independent of the trade union bureaucracies and parties that defend the capitalist order.

This requires a political break with the forces that present themselves as the left but subordinate mobilizations to parliamentary negotiations and the continuation of capitalist governments. The task is to unite these struggles in an international mobilization of the working class against austerity, repression and war, on the basis of a socialist programme that places social needs above private profit.



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