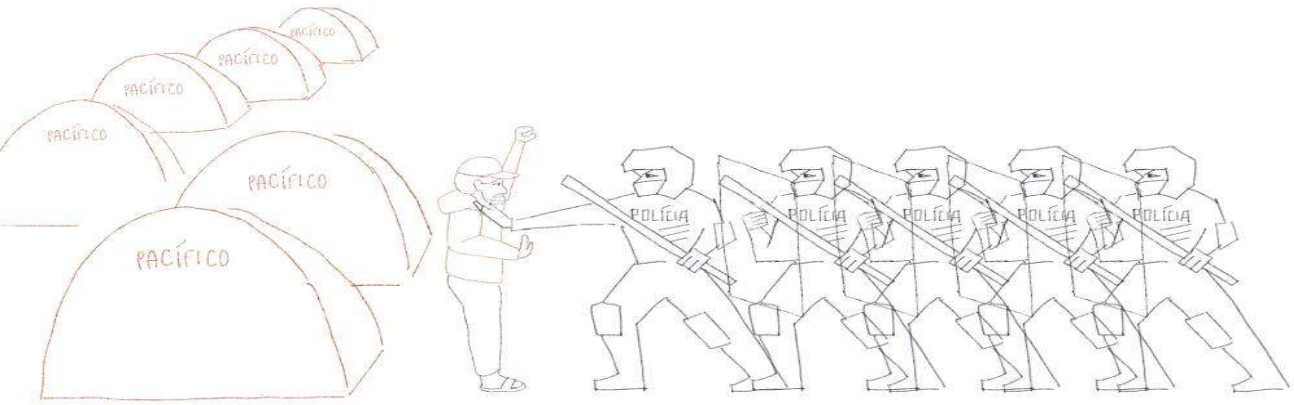


Open Letter Condemning Police Intervention Against the Housing Protest in Porto, Portugal

For the right to protest, the protection of civic space, and respect for the rule of law

The undersigned organisations express their condemnation of the police intervention against participants in the Porto Encampment mobilisation for the right to housing, which took place in the early hours of 15 October 2026 at Praça D. João I in Porto, and demand a thorough and independent investigation into the circumstances in which it took place.

Video footage and accounts from participants show police charging at people who had gathered peacefully, even after they had complied with the order to dismantle their tents. The Housing Movement reported 37 people injured, including two with serious injuries involving fractures. Assaults against people filming the intervention and the destruction of tents and personal belongings were also reported. The seriousness of these allegations demands an appropriate public and institutional response, rather than their normalisation as a mere consequence of a public order operation.

The Mayor of Porto, Pedro Duarte, had already declared that he would be “absolutely relentless” in dealing with the setting up of tents and that the square would not become a “campsite”. But a mobilisation for the right to housing cannot be reduced to a camping issue. What is at stake is a form of political participation, collective organisation, and the expression of social demands. Disagreement with the form a protest takes does not exempt the authorities from respecting the rights of those who participate in it.

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic is clear in establishing that citizens have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, including in places open to the public, “without the need for any authorisation”. Everyone is likewise recognised as having the right to demonstrate. The prior notification requirement provided for in Decree-Law No. 406/74 is not a request for authorisation and cannot be turned into a mechanism for political permission.

It is precisely the selective application of these requirements that concerns us: when a formality is used to prevent a peaceful gathering, it ceases to serve the organisation of the exercise of a right and instead becomes an obstacle to its realisation. We demand

clarification as to whether this occurred in this case, and that the legal grounds and criteria guiding the interventions be made public.

We do not argue that the right to demonstrate eliminates all rules governing the use of public space. We argue that these rules cannot be used as a pretext to hollow out a fundamental right. Invoking the occupation of public space does not bring the discussion to an end: it requires the authorities to demonstrate why the intervention was necessary, what alternatives were considered, and whether the means used were proportionate.

Civic space is where people come together, organise, challenge decisions, and demand change. When the response to a peaceful mobilisation is police force, the message reaches far beyond those present: it can intimidate everyone considering taking part in the next protest, organising the next assembly, or making the next demand public.

That is why this episode concerns democracy and the rule of law itself. The law must constrain the exercise of power, not provide it with an automatic justification. Its application cannot vary according to political convenience, the substance of the demands being made, or the inconvenience caused by a mobilisation.

Considering these events, we demand:

- A swift, independent, and effective investigation into allegations of police violence and the destruction or loss of property;
- Disclosure of the legal grounds, decision-making chain, and orders that determined the police and municipal interventions;
- The preservation of relevant records and the protection of those who provide testimony;
- The establishment of accountability and compensation for substantiated damages;
- Effective guarantees that prior notification requirements and rules governing the use of public space will not be instrumentalised to selectively restrict peaceful gatherings and demonstrations.

Defending the right to demonstrate does not require agreeing with every demand. It requires recognising that no one should be intimidated or assaulted for gathering peacefully to express their views.

Democracy is not protected by silencing those who exercise it.

Signatory organisations:

Academia Cidadã (Portugal) — Jonni Lopes, Executive Director.

4Change (Portugal) — Sandra Oliveira, Co-founder and Head Advisor.

Akto — Direitos Humanos e Democracia (Portugal) — Sofia Figueiredo, Executive Director.

List of signatory organisations last updated on 2 November 2026.
Contact: info@academiacidada.org

APTEA — Associação Para a Transformação de Ecossistemas de Aprendizagem (Portugal) — Susana Almeida, Chair of the Board.

Arci (Italy) — Raffaella Bolini, Vice-President.

Associação ACT INTEGRATION (Romania) — Mirela Rusu, President.

Associação Cultural Saco de Gatos (Portugal) — Luís Costa, President.

Associação ILGA Portugal (Portugal) — Daniela Filipe Bento, President.

Associação Par — Respostas Sociais (Portugal) — Beatriz Nogueira, General Coordinator and Project Manager.

Associação Renovar a Mouraria (Portugal) — Filipa Bolotinha, Chair of the Board and General Coordinator.

Attac Italia (Italy) — Marco Bersani, National Coordinator.

Cantarella (Portugal) — Inês Caetano, Singer and Adufe Player.

Casa da Horta — Associação Cultural (Portugal) — Isabel Diogo, President.

CATARSE — Movimento Social (Portugal) — Catarina Peniche, Co-founder and Active Member.

CCIE — Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe (Belgium) — Karim Ridwan, Head of the International Department.

CENA-STE (Portugal) — Carla Bolito, Board Member.

Centro Português de Estudos Humanistas (Portugal).

Cinema Fulgor (Portugal) — Sílvia das Fadas, Founder and Film Programmer.

CIVICUS (South Africa) — Reylynne, ADC Lead.

Coletivo Epifania (Portugal) — Rio Pontes, Representative.

Colectivo Gato Aleatório (Portugal) — Catarina Simões, Sebastião Braga and Rui Monteiro, Collective Members.

Coletivo Cria'ctividade (Portugal) — Violeta Campos, Collective Member.

Community Rights in Greece (Greece) — Moussa Sangare, Coordinator.

Contra Narrativa (Portugal) — Susana Marques, Founder.

Coop99 — Cooperativa Integral do Porto, CRL (Portugal) — Alina Santos, Board Member.

Cotovia de Poupa (Portugal).

CSV Polis — Volunteer Support Centre for Western Liguria (Italy) — Davide Pesce, Journalist.

Cultura no Muro (Portugal) — Diana Coelho, Board Member.

Deslarguem a Arrábida (Portugal) — João Cruz, Movement Member.

Dunas Livres (Portugal) — Rebeca Mateus, Co-founder and Spokesperson.

Emfasis Non-Profit (Greece) — Maria Karra, Co-founder.

European Civic Forum (France) — Aarti Narsee, Senior Policy Officer.

European Movement Italy (Italy) — Pier Virgilio Dastoli, President.

Gata da Mata (Portugal) — Elina Stolde, Foraging Chef and Project Member.

GRAAL (Portugal) — Maria Teresa Castro Laranjeiro, Coordinating Council Member.

Greek Forum of Refugees (Greece) — Yonous Muhammadi, Managing Director.

Guimarães pela Igualdade (Portugal) — Luís Lisboa, President.

HuBB — Humans Before Borders (Portugal) — Sandra Machado, Collective Member.

IMPACTsci (Portugal) — Andreia Morgado, Founder and Director.

IMVF — Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr (Portugal) — Carolina Quina, Executive Board Member.

Irídia — Human Rights Defence Centre (Spain) — Anaïs Franquesa Griso, Director.

JS Bragança (Portugal) — Ana Raposo, Presiding Officer.

Konferénsia Panafrikanu di Lisboa (Portugal) — Apolo de Carvalho, Organiser.

LDH — Ligue des droits de l'Homme (France) — Jan Robert Suesser, National Bureau Member.

Liverdade (Portugal) — Ana Raquel Fernandes Monteiro, Leadership Member.

Livraria das Insurgentes (Portugal) — Luana Loria, Co-founder.

Malta Food Bank Foundation (Malta) — Irene Schembri, Founder and Chairperson.

Mapa dos Conflitos Ambientais (Portugal) — Sílvia Jorge, Manager.

Mbongi 67 (Portugal) — Maíra Zenun, Coordinator.

Media Diversity Institute Global (Belgium) — Ivana Jovanovic, Project Manager.

Movimento Ação Revolucionária (Portugal) — Bruno Miguel Filipe, Signatory on behalf of the Movement.

MUBi — Associação pela Mobilidade Urbana em Bicicleta (Portugal) — Vera Diogo, Chair of the Board.

NOVACT (Spain) — Luca Gervasoni, Director.

Nyt Europa (Denmark) — Julie Rosenkilde, Director.

O Lado Negro da Força (Portugal) — José Rui Rosário, Creator and Co-founder.

O Que Faz Falta — Podcast (Portugal) — Luís Leite, Creator.

Ocupa UMinho (Portugal) — César Figueiredo, Member.

Parar o Hotel no Quartel (Portugal).

Plataforma de Direitos Humanos (Portugal) — Ana Rita Brito, President, and Sandra Oliveira, Treasurer.

Plataforma Portuguesa das Organizações Não-Governamentais para o Desenvolvimento (Portugal) — Carla Paiva, Chair of the Board.

Porto Inclusive (Portugal) — The Porto Inclusive Team.

Quilombo Porto (Portugal) — Isabelle Euclides da Silva, Leadership Member.

Quercus — Núcleo Regional de Coimbra (Portugal) — André Leal, Chair of the Coimbra Regional Branch.

Reabrir a Galé (Portugal) — Maria Prata, Movement Representative.

Rede 8 de Março (Portugal) — Celina Bermudez Vogensen, Activist.

Refugees Welcome Portugal (Portugal) — Inês Antunes, Projects and Volunteering Assistant.

República Spreit-Ó-Furo (Portugal) — Ana Fonseca, Member.

Roda Universo (Portugal) — Carlos Mata, Organiser.

Saber Compreender (Portugal) — Dora Filipa Matos, Leadership Member and Activist.

SaMaNe — Saúde das Mães Negras e Racializadas (Portugal) — Carolina Coimbra, Board Member.

Sismógrafo (Portugal) — Rita Senra, Board Secretary.

The Royal Studio (Portugal) — João Carlos Oliveira Castro, Managing Partner.

Transform! Italia (Italy) — Roberto Morea, President.

Tresmoças — Banda de cantares tradicionais (Portugal) — Rita Só, Singer and Instrumentalist.

Urtigas70 (Portugal) — Mariana Moreira Rebelo da Costa, Member.

Volonteurope (Belgium) — Furkan Sorkuncuk, Project Coordinator.

Wu Buntu IAM (Portugal) — Iury Coelho, Executive Producer.

XRPT (Portugal) — Cátia Biscaia, Member.