

Europe: Fighting for justice for homeless people in Hungary. A Város Mindenkié | The City is for All- Call for Solidarity

Monday 12 November 2018, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 9 November 2018).

Hungary-based organization “The City is for All” has launched a call for solidarity with their struggle against a new law which punishes homeless persons even more harshly than before:

Dear international friends,

On October 15, 2018 a new law came into force in Hungary, **penalizing homelessness even harsher than ever before**. [1]. Today homeless people may even go to jail for the sole reason of having no place to live. Hungarian society has reacted to this new piece of legislation in diverse ways, but the wave of solidarity with homeless people and mass resistance against the law are stronger than ever before.

On September 29, [2], which demanded an end to the eviction of families with children and the repeal of the new law against homeless people. More than 1000 people participated in the march.

On October 14, [3] in front of the Parliament. There were more than 1000 people at the protest.

Over the first two weeks after the new legislation came into force, [4], especially in Budapest. At the same time, a series of **solidarity statements** were issued by lawyers, writers, teachers, social scientists, social workers, medical doctors, psychologists, Christians and Roma activists. In total, these open letters and petitions were signed by several thousand Hungarians.

We know of at least **six homeless people who were detained** and brought in front of the court in an expedited procedure under the new law. In three cases, the court gave a warning to the defendants, in one case the charges were dismissed as the defendant managed to prove that he had a shack to live in, while in another the case was postponed because of the physical condition of the defendant. In two cases, the regional court suspended the procedure and [5]. Now, the fate of homeless people in Hungary is in the hands of the Constitutional Court, which has 90 days to make a decision about whether to uphold, repeal or modify the law.

On Sunday, November 4, [6] to demand a humane decision and to call attention to the fact that homelessness can be eliminated only through responsible housing policies that provide affordable, healthy and stable housing for everyone and not by punishing those who are already on the streets. Several hundreds of people participated in this manifestation. The speeches, which included a number of individuals affected by homelessness, and Natália Kiss from the street-lawyer organization Utcajogász can be heard in Hungarian [7].

What led to this?

The criminalization of homelessness is not a new phenomenon in Hungary: the government has been trying to make street homelessness illegal ever since it came into power in 2010. Between 2013 and 2016, charges were brought against homeless people for sleeping in public spaces in almost 600 cases, most of which resulted in a warning of mandatory public work.

In parallel, The City is for All has been fighting against criminalization for the past 8 years by [8] and inviting [9] among others. The last time we attempted to change the situation was in 2016 when [10]. Unfortunately, the bill was not passed and now we are facing an even more threatening law.

Collective

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P.S.

Left East

<http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/justice-for-homeless-people-in-hungary/>

Footnotes

[1] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2018/10/12/putting_poverty_behind_bars_yet_another_effort_to_criminalize_homelessness_in_hungary">The Constitution amended in the summer of 2018 categorically declares that „Living habitually in public spaces is forbidden” in Hungary

[2] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2018/10/18/fifteen_hundred_rally_against_mass_evictions">The City is for All organized the **8th March for Housing**

[3] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2018/10/16/eighty_contemporary_writers_protest_against_the_persecution_of_homeless_people_in_budapest">contemporary writers, in cooperation with The City is for All organized a **mass protest**

[4] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2018/10/29/living_on_the_street_is_unrealistic_but_what_can_be_done_about_it">the police engaged in intensive activities of harassment and patrolling

[5] href="<https://verfassungsblog.de/guilty-of-homelessness-the-resurgence-of-penal-populism-in-hungary/>">referred the whole legislation to the Constitutional Court for supervision

[6] href="<https://merce.hu/2018/11/04/megerteni-segiteni-orvosolni-kell-es-nem-kriminalizalni-a-hajlektalan-emberekert-tuntetett-a-varos-mindenkie/>">**The City is for All held a protest in front of the Constitutional Court**

[7] href="<https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2018/11/05/emberseget-es-lakhatas-at-osszes-beszed-egy-helyen>">here

[8] href="<https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/tags/criminalization>">organizing mass protests, engaging in civil disobedience

[9] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2014/02/17/worldwide_protests_against_the_criminalization_of_homelessness_in_hungary">actions of international solidarity

[10] href="https://avarosmindenkie.blog.hu/2016/04/04/no_to_persecution_yes_to_housing_write_a_letter_to_the_members_of_the_hungarian_parliament">we proposed a bill to the Hungarian Parliament to withdraw the previous version of the regulation