

French rally to protest housing crisis



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Paris, January 3 (RHC)-- In Paris, homeless and poorly housed people, many of them undocumented workers, demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Housing, asking the French government to implement the requisition law.

They pointed out that the New Year began in freezing cold with 300,000 persons homeless or living in poor housing conditions. In the same period, 3 million buildings, houses or apartments are empty.

The official French national institute for statistics and economic studies INSEE calculated that the current rate of empty accommodation is a record in the history of France.

Protesters said that to rent an apartment in Paris costs at least 1,000 euros a month -- almost as much as the monthly minimum salary. The demonstrators marched in front of huge empty buildings as this one on Quai Voltaire, downtown Paris. The owners believe that the value of these buildings increases more by leaving them empty than by renting the space to people.

Organizers of the protest said that the last time the requisition law was implemented was 25 years ago. They said that the French government prefers to please the real estate lobby, rather than to solve the housing crisis.

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