

French Activists Occupy Empty Hospital in a Simple Housing Solution



Paris, January 5 (RHC)-- In the French capital, hundreds of people desperate to change the nation's housing policies stormed and occupied an abandoned public hospital. With chants like "Apply the Law" and "Housing for Everyone," many activists could not believe that such a spacious building sits unused while housing inequalities have soared.

France is in the middle of a major housing crisis: 1 out of 6 people suffers from some sort of housing issue, homelessness is up 50% over the past decade and, during a cold spell last week, 5 homeless people froze to death in the streets on just one night.

President Francois Hollande's long-awaited housing reform was passed in September, but many called it a capitulation to the real estate lobby and wealthy speculators. Hollande reneged on his promise to cap rents, which are up 120 percent since 2000, and the waiting list for government housing is some two million people.

French law permits the government to requisition empty housing. Laws also force the government to provide housing to homeless people, and another law states that citizens with poor housing can only wait

for six months before the state must intervene. Despite all the laws protecting those with housing problems, French police forced the activists to leave the vacant building.

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