

# Portugal: Precarious generation on the march

300,000 on the streets

Monday 14 March 2011, by [Bloco de Esquerda \(Left Bloc / Bloc de Gauche\)](#) (Date first published: 14 March 2011).

On Saturday 12 March 2011, shouting “With casualised jobs there can be no freedom!” 200,000 people gathered in Lisbon and 80, 000 in Porto. The protests marked an extraordinary mobilisation that spread to all 11 other cities across the country, and even to other European countries.

In Lisbon, a sea of people which never stopped growing filled the Avenida da Liberdade, from the Marques de Pombal Square to the Rossio.

Participation in the demonstration of the “breadline generation” far exceeded the numbers originally expected, with about 300 000 people taking part across the country, said Lusa Paula Gil, one of the organisers. “Hopefully it is the first step in a participatory democracy in Portugal,” he said.

Thousands of people in several cities joined the protest of “the casualised generation,” convened by four youths, in protest against the lack of a future for young people in Portugal. The announcement of the numbers participating to the crowds in Rossio Square, Lisbon, was accompanied by cries of “the street is ours”.

The “ant on the path,” a song by Zeca Afonso and a commercial slogan of a supermarket chain were taken up by the organizers of the protest of the “Generation of junk.” The two songs were adapted to sing as the main theme of the demonstration and resistance. The songs were sung as a rap while leaflets were handed to the demonstrators outlining the criticisms of the current system and proposals for change. Then three of the organizers read the manifesto. First Alexandre Carvalho, with a red rose in hand, followed after John and Paula Gil Labrincha.

Jel and Falâncio, from the group Homens da Luta whose song the “The Struggle is Joy” is Portugal’s entry to the Eurovision song contest, attended the event and were joined by singer and composer Fernando Tordo, who joined the group at Avenida da Liberdade.

On the street there were several generations, whole families or single persons, all sharing the idea that “the country is on the junk,” as read the banner that led the march in Lisbon.

In Porto, the size of the crowd forced a plan B to bypass the protest parade on Avenue of the Allies. The demonstration was scheduled to end in square D. João I, but the influx of people was so great that the participants of all ages, went to the Avenue of the Allies, which had an extensive platform of speakers. One of the most exciting moments came when a 25 year-old sang the words of a song made famous by Simone de Oliveira who won the Eurovision Song Contest in 1969.

In Coimbra a diversity of generations that came together marked the event. Students, teachers, parents or siblings of threatened workers, were taking turns to speak at Republic Square,. By mid-afternoon, they began a march chanting the slogan raised during the Portuguese revolution of 1974 : “The people united will never be defeated.”

Hundreds of young people spontaneously joined the march in Rossio Square. André Carvalho, 18, told the Portuguese news channel why he was there: "Now I am carrying the weight of books on my back, but I want to contribute, as I can, so that tomorrow I will not have to carry on my back the burden of unemployment."

The protests spread to seven other cities like Faro (6000 people), Leiria (500 people), Guimaraes, Braga (over 2 000 people), Castelo Branco (200 people), Funchal and Ponta Delgada (400 people).

In other European cities, young immigrants have joined protests in front of Portuguese embassies in London, Barcelona and The Hague.

Deolinda, the band, whose song "Parva que sou" expresses the hopelessness of the young, poor and unemployed, sympathized with the protest of the "generation of junk, announced through Facebook that they would be present" in consciousness. The group members were on their way to Galicia for a concert.

***To read the manifesto under which the march was convened, go to:***

[Portugal: The Precarious Generation Manifest](#)

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## **P.S.**

\* From International Viewpoint Online magazine : IV434 - March 2011.

\* Bloco de Esquerda is a radical left political party in Portugal formed in 2000 as a coalition of the formerly Maoist UDP; Politica XX1, a current that had left the Communist Party; and the PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International. Today it is a recognised political party with elected representatives in the national and European parliaments.