

# Homeless, Whose Problem?

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ECONOMY

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*"The rise of hostile measures is a sad indictment of how we treat the most vulnerable in our society. Having to sleep rough is devastating enough. We should be helping people off the streets to rebuild their lives – not just hurting them or throwing water on them."*

These words belong to an executive from a homeless charity in London and reflect a heart-wrenching truth.

Homelessness is a growing problem around the world, but it's rarely talked about. A United Nations report suggests that 100 million people are homeless and another 1.6 billion people lack adequate housing around the world. However, given the steady increase in homelessness, it is not difficult to guess that current numbers are much higher.

Countries are having difficulty keeping pace with the problem, which grows regardless of the wealth of nations or the lack thereof. For instance, there are around 60,000 homeless in New York City, where some of the world's wealthiest live.

However, there is another dimension to the problem, which has increasingly turned into a disturbing trend. Far too many people are growing openly hostile to these desolate individuals, most of whom already have more than enough issues to deal with aside from being homeless. In a troubling example of the ever-spreading culture of hate and lovelessness, homeless people are more and more treated like criminals, or sights that should be kept away from public view. For instance, spikes have begun to turn up across the cities of England, in places where homeless people previously tried to sleep. Street fixtures are now designed so that no one can lie on them. Benches are rounded, or segregated, with bars installed underneath so that no one can sleep there, too. Rough sleepers report being hosed with water by security guards and bus stops are designed to make sure that no one can sleep on the benches. Similar spikes and measures have begun to appear in other cities of the world including Paris, Montreal, New York and Tokyo. In Australia, "move on" laws permit authorities to "disperse" homeless people "where a person's mere presence could cause anxiety to another person or interfere with another's 'reasonable enjoyment' of the space". Paris police are reported to have taken the blankets of homeless people in an attempt to send them away. In other words, such hostility is increasing at an alarming rate. Homeless people also testify to the trend and say that the attitude has been shifting significantly in the past years and people are becoming more uncaring and hostile.

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However, there is another dimension to the problem, which has increasingly turned into a disturbing trend. Far too many people are growing openly hostile to these desolate individuals, most of whom already have more than enough issues to deal with aside from being homeless. In a troubling example of the ever-spreading culture of hate and lovelessness, homeless people are more and more treated like criminals, or sights that should be kept away from public view. For instance, spikes have begun to turn up across the cities of England, in places where homeless people previously tried to sleep. Street fixtures are now designed so that no one can lie on them. Benches are rounded, or segregated, with bars installed underneath so that no one can sleep there, too. Rough sleepers report being hosed with water by security [guards](#) and bus stops are designed to make sure that no one can sleep on the [benches](#). Similar spikes and measures have begun to appear in other cities of the world including Paris, Montreal, New York and [Tokyo](#). In Australia, "move on" laws permit authorities to "disperse" homeless people "where a person's mere presence could cause anxiety to another person or interfere with another's 'reasonable enjoyment' of the [space](#)". Paris police are reported to have taken the blankets of homeless people in an attempt to send them [away](#). In other words, such hostility is increasing at an alarming rate. Homeless people also testify to the trend and say that the attitude has been shifting significantly in the past years and people are becoming more uncaring and [hostile](#).

These incidents eerily remind of other cases of inhumanity that now became a part of evening news; for example, only last summer, footage surfaced showing how people laughed at a drowning refugee in Venice's Grand [Canal](#) in Italy; he died minutes later in front of their eyes. Or remember how that infamous Hungarian camerawoman tripped a refugee man running with his child in his [arms](#), or when European police tear-gassed and used batons against refugees that had children, women and elderly amongst them, people who were running for their [lives](#).

As a UN report states, 'the nature and scope of homelessness globally suggests society's lack of compassion for the full scale of deprivation and loss of dignity associated with being [homeless](#).'

We should remember that these people have to deal with lack of a safe shelter, food, warmth, and privacy - not to mention the constant threat of abuse, violence, exploitation and humiliation. A large number of them suffer from medical problems. Children, women and the elderly are particularly at risk, especially during the winter months: Even worse, they are easy preys to street drugs, the most recent example of which has been seen in Manchester, England. A new street drug that is so common among homeless people is extraordinarily harmful; it is turning them into frozen statues. Disturbing footage shows these people keeling over, frozen in place and regrettably most of the time, not even getting a second glance from the [passersby](#).

Thankfully, there are good developments too, times when good people show that their fellow humans haven't forgotten about them. In a show of [solidarity](#), many British people chose to cover the spikes with mattresses and cushions across the cities. In Istanbul, which is struggling with its own share of the problem, albeit to a lesser extent, activists hand out soup to the city's [underprivileged](#) every night. Countless homeless charities are working full-time to do everything they can to ease the pain of these people, who deserve dignity and respect just as much as anyone else.

No one chooses to be homeless and certainly no one deserves to be treated with any less respect because of it. In truth, they deserve and need even more respect and kindness for experiencing something so difficult, many of us don't even wish to think about it.

One might wonder, how is it possible that the problem is not yet solved? There is no doubt that many countries have made well-intentioned efforts to solve the problem,

but clearly they are not enough. For this reason, it is crucial to carefully devise strategies and set the priorities right. Some of the most urgent and immediate steps can include the following:

- The number of shelters and aid workers should be quickly increased to save as many people as possible. Funds can be raised through simple tax schemes that are not too burdensome on the public. For example, every credit card can be charged \$1/month to contribute to the homeless fund.
- It should be made impossible to force anyone to evacuate his/her home unless he or she has a safe and dignified place to go, which has proper privacy. Governments can use the aforementioned funds to subsidize the costs of homeowners who have tenants in such positions.
- Minimum wages must be sufficient to pay the rent and buy food.
- Healthcare costs should not strip people of their ability to pay their rents and render them homeless. In other words, when people get sick, they shouldn't have to contemplate losing their homes, too.

It is important to imagine ourselves being in the shoes of these people. No one would want to be in that position and no one would certainly want to be treated with hostility because they didn't have a home. So without further ado, let's make up for our mistakes, and choose to be better, kinder and more compassionate. It doesn't matter what choices were made in the past as there is always another opportunity to change and do the right thing. Helping will not necessarily be an easy matter and it will not necessarily come without a price, but that's why it is valuable, precious and not something everyone can do.

Adnan Oktar's piece in American Herald Tribune:

<http://ahtribune.com/economy/1573-homeless.html>

<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/homeless-whose-problem>