

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES



Centro de Estudos Sociais
Universidade de Coimbra



UNIVERSIDADE DE
COIMBRA



Organização
das Nações Unidas
para a Educação,
a Ciência e a Cultura



Universidade de
Coimbra - Alta e Sã
inscrita na Lista do Património
Mundial em 2013



PROGRAMA OPERACIONAL COMERCÍO E INOVAÇÃO



UNIÃO EUROPEIA

Fundo Europeu
de Desenvolvimento Regional



Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Editor

José Reis

Publisher

Centre for Social Studies
University of Coimbra

Scientific Review

Ana Cordeiro Santos, António Sousa Ribeiro, Carlos Fortuna, João Rodrigues,
José Castro Caldas, José Reis, Pedro Hespanha, Vítor Neves

Linguistic Revision

João Paulo Moreira

Editorial Assistant

Rita Kacia Oliveira

Design and Pagination

André Queda

December, 2020

This work is funded by ERDF Funds through the Competitiveness Factors Operational Programme - COMPETE and by National Funds through the FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology within the UIDB/50012/2020 project.

The data and opinions included in this publication are the exclusive responsibility of its authors.

ISBN

978-989-8847-28-7

REFUGEES

Carlos Nolasco

In 2018, 70.8 million people were in a situation of forced mobility due to persecution, conflict, violence or violation of human rights. Of these, 25.9 million were refugees, 41.3 were displaced in their countries of origin and 3.5 million were asylum seekers. Half of the refugees were under the age of 18 and 111,000 were unaccompanied children. Every day 37,000 people enter a situation of forced displacement. By comparison, in 2009, the number of people in forced mobility was 43.3 million. These figures have been rising especially since 2012, with successive armed conflicts and persecutions in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Bangladesh, and lately in Ethiopia and Venezuela, among others. One third of refugees are in the world's poorest countries and only 16 percent in countries in developed regions. The paradoxes of the world are clear in these figures, made available by the UN. People are being increasingly forced by circumstances to flee their places of origin. At the same time, countries that are signatories to conventions in which they commit themselves to reception, that possess high development indicators and arrogate themselves to a political ethics based on the defence of fundamental rights intensify border protection efforts by raising obstacles to reception, refusing entry to refugees and, in some cases, criminalising humanitarian aid to those who help them.

In face of an increasingly harsh reality, aggravated by the social and political circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the alternatives are apparently simple, but almost utopian in their implementation. Firstly, where Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right to seek asylum on the part of those who are persecuted, it should also provide for the recognition, on the part of States, of the obligation to take in those who need refuge – simply because the chances of leaving become difficult if they meet with a lack of willingness to receive. Secondly, a new refugee status must be established, extending its scope to those seeking refuge as a result of environmental problems and natural disasters. By the same token, all those who are forced to leave because of widespread poverty and lack of life prospects must also be considered refugees, even if they come from countries not experiencing conflict. Thirdly, all countries that signed conventions and refugee statuses must be penalised under international law and be subject to economic sanctions if they refuse to support and receive refugees. Fourthly, countries with better development indicators must develop effective common refugee protection policies. Finally, the most relevant of all the alternatives is that global measures and actions must be developed to prevent barbarities, promote regional development at a political, economic and environmental level, and defend fundamental rights without concessions.