

Capitalism in UK causes the Number of Rough Sleepers to Increase every year

News:

On 26 January 2018, The Guardian Newspaper reported that “Rough sleeping in England has increased for the seventh consecutive year, official figures show, and charities say even this steep rise fails to capture the true level of street homelessness... The separate Chain database, which records rough sleepers in London seen by outreach workers, last June reported 8,108 rough sleepers.”

Balbir Chatrik, director of policy at the Centrepont charity, said: “These figures are shocking, but they only attempt to count the number of people sleeping rough on one night. We know there are thousands more young people who are hidden homeless – sofa-surfing for months on end, sleeping on public transport or staying with strangers just to find a bed for the night.”

Ironically, on the same day, the newspaper also reported that “half of new-build luxury London flats fail to sell... complete with private gyms, swimming pools and cinema rooms, are lying empty as hundreds of thousands of would-be first-time buyers struggle to find an affordable home.” With the comment “Hoping for great profits, developers have continued to build expensive towers, while the greatest demand from Londoners is for more affordable homes.”

Jon Sparkes, the chief executive of Crisis, said, “It is truly a catastrophe that in a country as prosperous as this, more and more people are finding themselves forced to sleep in dangerous and freezing conditions when we have evidence to show how the situation could be turned around.”

Comment:

London is not the only city in the rich capitalist West which is shamefully exposed by its homelessness statistics. Indeed, on the same day in the same newspaper, as came the story of how the authorities in the American city of Seattle removed the rough sleepers, then erected bicycle racks to prevent them returning. This response is typical in the West: pushing the problem onto someone else’s doorstep. Developers in London are increasingly installing metal studs around their properties to prevent people sleeping there. This is part of an increasing trend known as “hostile design” to reduce the cost of policing “anti-social behaviour.”

It is common to see official signs discouraging feeding homeless people, stating that you are only feeding their addiction to drugs and alcohol. This builds the feeling in the public that rough sleepers are all criminals who are there by choice and so do not deserve helping.

What the figures do not reveal, and what is most shocking is that is now easy to find whole families, men women and children, sleeping rough on London's streets. An increasing number of rough sleepers are well educated and even have jobs during the day, but are unable to afford proper housing, so are forced onto the streets. Furthermore, mental illness, which is itself on the increase in the West, is a common route to homelessness.

Sleeping on the street is not safe, as the winter weather can be traitorous, and rough sleepers are often attacked by passers-by.

Each political party blames the other's policies for not tackling homelessness, yet whoever is in power, the situation is never solved, because the ideology that they both adhere to itself cannot solve the problem, but actually causes it. Ensuring that every citizen has adequate shelter should be a fundamental duty of the state, while the capitalists who run the state are more focused on protecting their wealth and interests from the rest of the people of the world, lest they expect a share in some of it.

Islam recognised the fundamental right to housing, clothing, and food, as the Prophet (saw) stated: **«لَيْسَ لِابْنِ آدَمَ حَقٌّ فِيمَا سِوَى هَذِهِ الْخِصَالِ: بَيْتٌ يَسْتُرُهُ، وَثَوْبٌ يُوَارِي عَوْرَتَهُ، وَجُفْءٌ الْخُبْزِ، وَالْمَاءِ»** **“The Son of Adam has no better right than that he would have a house wherein he may live, a piece of clothing whereby he may hide his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water.”**

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ruler to ensure that these basic rights are met, not pandering to the wealthy capitalists every desire. When Western politicians talk of tackling homelessness, they usually find that there is little money left for such a low priority as the ordinary people, having spent it all bailing out their capitalist banking friends, or funding dictators and expensive wars overseas, to protect the interests of their capitalist merchant friends. The only action they can take, therefore, is using the police to remove the rough sleepers, making the problem less visible, hoping that ordinary people are fooled into thinking that they are solving the problem.

The Islamic system, when applied as the Guided Khilafah (Caliphate) on the way of Prophethood will not only seek to make cosmetic changes to hide the growing problem of homelessness, as the capitalists do, rather it will divert serious resources to ensure that the root causes of the problem are removed, whether those causes are social, psychological, or economic.

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