

An Open Letter to Prime Minister Luís Montenegro

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AUTHOR	LetterToLeader AI Editorial
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Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing this letter to you from Lisbon, sitting on a terrace in Alfama under the warm afternoon sun, watching the famous Tram 28 rattle past. To the outside world, Portugal looks like paradise—a land of eternal sunshine, welcoming people, incredible food, and a magnet for hundreds of thousands of tourists and digital nomads. As Portuguese, we take pride in our openness and hospitality.

But if you step off the tourist trail and look into the residential neighborhoods of Lisbon, Porto, or Coimbra, that postcard-perfect image instantly shatters. Two years have passed since you took office following a prolonged crisis and the collapse of the socialist government. You promised the Portuguese people a "fresh start," tax relief, and an economic breakthrough. Yet today, as we watch our country turn into an affordable playground for wealthy foreigners while locals are priced out of their own homeland, a deep sense of disillusionment is settling in.

Portugal is tired of being Western Europe's "cheap gem" for visitors and an "expensive

trap" for its own citizens. We need radical structural reforms, not cosmetic promises:

The Housing Crisis and the Displacement of a Nation: This is the defining catastrophe of modern Portugal. Driven by unchecked short-term rentals (AirBnB) and tax perks designed for foreign residents, real estate prices have skyrocketed. A young Portuguese professional earning an average salary of €1,100–€1,200 cannot buy a home—they can barely even afford a basic studio apartment in Lisbon. Our youth are emigrating to Germany, France, and the UK in droves because they literally have nowhere to live at home. We don't need minor housing subsidies; we need strict curbs on real estate speculation and a massive public investment program in affordable housing for local families.

The Chronic Collapse of Public Healthcare (SNS): Our National Health Service is in a state of permanent emergency. Waiting lists to see specialists stretch on for months, emergency rooms in rural areas regularly shut down due to staff shortages, and doctors are migrating to the private sector or moving abroad for better pay. You promised to rescue the SNS, but so far, we are witnessing the steady decay of public medicine. The Portuguese people do not pay heavy taxes only to find hospital doors locked when an emergency strikes.

A Low-Wage Economy and Stagnation: Our economy is trapped in a low-value cycle driven by services and tourism. While tourism breaks records and fills state coffers, it generates fragile, low-paying jobs. Portugal desperately needs re-industrialization, high-tech investment, and serious support for the domestic private sector. The middle class deserves to earn at Central European standards, rather than living paycheck to paycheck and cutting back on basic groceries.

The Migration Backlog and Administrative Chaos: Your government made the right call by ending the controversial *manifestação de interesse* mechanism, which allowed anyone entering on a tourist visa to regularize their status. It was a necessary step to halt the chaos. However, the migration agency (AIMA) is now buried under a mountain of over 400,000 unresolved cases. People are stranded in a legal vacuum for months without documents, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation in the underground economy. We need a legal, transparent, and strictly managed migration policy that aligns with Portugal's economic interests without creating bureaucratic gridlock.

Mr. Montenegro, you are leading a fragile minority coalition government, forced to walk a political tightrope every day between pressure from the left and the rising influence of the populist Chega party. This is a grueling political theater. But if your administration focuses solely on surviving the next budget vote in the Assembly of the Republic, you will lose the country.

Show true political courage. Stand up to the real estate and tourism lobbies that are squeezing the life out of Portugal. Give our young people a reason to believe they can build a future here—not just be born and grow old here, but build careers, raise children, and live with dignity.

With the urgent demand for decisive action and deep concern for our future,

A Citizen of the Portuguese Republic

P.S. Executive Leadership Audit: Prime Minister Luís Montenegro An evaluation of the Prime Minister's performance and governance after two years in office (on a strict scale from 1 to 5):

Political Survival and Maneuvering: 4.2 (Demonstrates elite political equilibrium, successfully running a minority government and passing legislation through the Assembly without entering a formal alliance with radicals)

Macroeconomic Stability: 4.0 (Maintains strict fiscal discipline, preserves a budget surplus, and steadily reduces public debt, earning high marks from Brussels and international rating agencies)

Addressing Critical Social Crises (Housing & Healthcare): 2.5 (The administration's primary failure. Market-driven incentives to boost construction have done nothing to alleviate the immediate housing crunch for ordinary citizens, and the SNS continues to deteriorate)

Migration Policy and Border Control: 3.5 (Successfully tightened entry requirements to restore legal order, but the executive branch (AIMA) remains paralyzed by the bureaucratic backlog inherited from the previous administration)

Final Verdict: 3.55 / The Tightrope Tech. Luís Montenegro has proven to be a far more resilient and pragmatic leader than analysts predicted in 2024. He has stabilized the nation's finances and kept the country away from disruptive snap elections. However, his purely technocratic, centrist approach is failing to heal Portugal's deepest social wounds. If his government does not tame the cost-of-living and housing crises soon, macroeconomic stability will mean very little to an aging population watching its brightest young minds leave the country.

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