

**Catarina Sarmento e Castro**

Ministra da Justiça

**Intervenção da Ministra da Justiça, Catarina Sarmento e Castro, por ocasião da Sessão de Abertura da Conferência “WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION – Status Report on Prison Health”, na Sede do Infarmed – Parque da Saúde de Lisboa.**

Lisboa, 15 de fevereiro de 2023

The right to health is enshrined as a **human right** by the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, a Covenant which obliges States Parties to take steps to achieve the full realization of this right, including the creation of conditions to assure medical service to all.

And the Portuguese legal framework is in line with these international provisions. Our **Constitution** includes the right to the protection of health among the fundamental rights, which shall be fulfilled through a national health service.

Accordingly, being deprived of liberty does not make a person less entitled to those rights, and the Portuguese **Code on the Implementation of Prison Sentences** explicitly states that inmates are, for all purposes, entitled to use the National Health Service.

In fact, our approach is to assume that the period of deprivation of liberty shall constitute an opportunity to promote and improve health, namely for persons who, prior to their



detention, had limited access or interrupted treatment cycles due to situations such as extreme poverty and social vulnerability.

Within this framework, **the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health** have been working very closely to make this right effective for all persons deprived of their liberty, and the cooperation extends to those persons not criminally responsible due to **mental health** conditions who are serving a judicially imposed security measure of confinement at a mental health institution.

Allow me to emphasize: the Minister of Justice pays special attention to the living conditions of the prison population, and in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, is determined to ensure that the right to health and human dignity, central values of this Government, are a reality in Portuguese prisons.

There is, of course, still a long way to go, and I am sure that these two days of exchange and discussion will enrich our policies on the promotion of health in prisons, for the benefit of public health and of the human lives who are everyday at the heart of our action as politicians.



Thank you.