

# Protests held against police eviction of “indignados” from Madrid’s Puerta del Sol

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On Tuesday at 6.15am, around 300 police forcibly evicted what was left of the 15-M movement, or the *indignados* (the angry ones), from Puerta del Sol square. They also evicted other protestors camped out in the Paseo del Prado since July 23, when demonstrators from around Spain arrived for a protest attended by 35,000 people.

Only 90 were left in the main square in Madrid, after the decision was made last June to leave the square and move to the neighborhoods. The police described them as “tramps.” One even claimed, “The truth is that the kids did not resist. They were very tired, and some even thanked us for dislodging them”.

This is a bald-faced lie. The police had unsuccessfully attempted to clear the square one week before, when a group of protestors camped outside the parliament attempted to give a list of demands to the deputies. They were violently dispersed. That is why the police and the Madrid council, controlled by the right-wing People’s Party, bided their time until now—just two weeks before the visit of the Pope Benedict XVI for the World Youth Day festival, of August 16-21.

Hours after the forced removal, the government and the Madrid Council ordered all accesses to the square, even the metro and train stations, denied for everyone, including journalists and pedestrians. The blockade continued all day, with 50 police vans occupying the square.

This action provoked a mass of messages through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, urging an attempt to get back into Puerta del Sol. Over a thousand convened shouting, “National shame, Police state”, “This is our square,” “Shame, shame!” and “This shit is not a democracy.”

Finding the square completely blocked by lines of riot police, most of the protestors marched through the

adjacent streets blocking the main roads through the capital. One of the stops was the Congress of Deputies, with marchers chanting: “This building belongs to the people”.

The march ended at the Plaza Mayor, where hundreds of *indignados* set up another assembly, deciding where to move the “information point of the 15-M Movement” as the one in Puerta del Sol had been dismantled. The next day, the police removed the rest of the protestors that were in the square.

The dislodging of Puerta del Sol ends a 78-day long occupation, which started on May 15, a week before the local and regional elections.

Under conditions where Spain might need a bailout package from the European Union, and with the announcement of early elections for November 20 by Prime Minister Zapatero of the Socialist Party (PSOE) that the PP is likely to win, an effort to bring the protest movement to a close was inevitable.

The Puerta del Sol had become the center of the mass protests around Spain over hardship, savage austerity measures and the political establishment implementing them. The protests were characterised by a rejection of all major parties, the PSOE above all, which has implemented cuts over the past three years amid unemployment levels reaching 50 percent among 18 to 25-year-olds, as well as being against trade unions that have been the main vehicle in imposing these measures.

Within the assemblies that were set up, however, the leadership promoted a line of “autonomy” and “no-politics”—preventing any genuine debate and political challenge to the PSOE and the union bureaucracy.

The movement, composed mainly of students and sectors of the middle class, attracted sympathy from broader layers of workers and young people. However, it was confined to a perspective of pressuring the PSOE

to implement limited reforms—like changing the electoral system, banning individual corrupt politicians, or taxing bank transactions.

This is a fatal weakness, as the PSOE government has no intention of making concessions to the working class, but rather of making further cuts as demanded by the financial markets.

Active within the *indignado* movement are the middle-class, ex-left groups such as *Izquierda Anticapitalista*, *El Militante* and *En Lucha*. They played the key role in channelling the movement from a political struggle against the PSOE and its accomplices in the union bureaucracy.



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