

Spain passes police state measures

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22 December 2014

The Spanish parliament has passed the Citizens Security Law, popularly known as the Gag Law.

The legislation represents the biggest attack on democratic rights since the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-1977). According to a Metroscopia poll, 82 percent of Spaniards oppose the law.

The ruling Popular Party (PP) government was able to pass the law due to its majority in parliament. The law still has to go through the Senate, which is a formality, as the Senate functions to rubber stamp laws passed by the parliament.

The Citizens Security Law is a new stage in the development of sweeping police-state powers. Its aim is to prevent mass demonstrations organised through social networks outside of the control of the main parties and union bureaucracies.

Any demonstrations not previously notified to the authorities can incur a fine of up to €600,000. Anyone who reports the demonstration, re-tweets it, or puts a “like” on Facebook faces similar penalties.

The videotaping of the police during demonstrations will be considered a serious breach of the law, with a fine of up to €30,000. The aim of this clause is to give impunity to the police, who have routinely used violence and mounted crackdowns and mass arrests in protests that have become an increasingly common occurrence in Spain since the 2008 global economic crisis.

Another clause introduces a penalty of up to €600 for anyone who shows “disrespect to State Security Forces.” What constitutes “disrespect” is not explained. Anyone involved in assemblies or meetings in public spaces, attempting to stop evictions or occupying a bank will also face fines.

Another controversial last-minute clause included in the law gives a green light to on-the-spot deportations of “illegal” migrant workers who climb over the border

fences surrounding the Spanish African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, legalising what has already been taking place. The clause contravenes the Geneva Convention on Refugees, to which Spain is a signatory, and a 2011 Royal Decree, which gives foreigners who enter Spain “irregularly” access to legal advice, the assistance of a translator, and the right to submit an application for asylum.

In a repugnant reply to his critics, Interior Minister Fernández Díaz declared, “If they give me an address where we can move these poor people and they can guarantee their upkeep and give them work, I assure you we will send them.”

The Citizens Security Law is just one aspect of the repressive legislation the government is imposing.

Another draft law reforming the Code of Criminal Procedure is being prepared to legitimise mass surveillance. It allows the police and security services to tap mobile phones and intercept electronic communications without the authorisation of a judge, to use false identities on the Internet, plant electronic surveillance devices, collect the DNA of arrested persons without their consent or that of a judge or without a lawyer being present, and to install software to extract information from someone’s computer. The circumstances in which this is allowed—if police allege that the suspect could be involved in a criminal organisation, terrorism, crimes against minors, crimes against the Constitution, treason and crimes related to national defence—are so broad that it can be applied to everyone.

The Spanish government claims the new repressive and surveillance measures are necessary because there is so much violence on demonstrations. It states that in 2012 there were 1,000 violent protests, €47.5 million worth of damages, and injuries to 865 citizens and 618 security forces. However, interior ministry reports show that, in recent years, of the 90,000 protests that have

taken place, only 72 were classified as violent.

The truth is that the government is preparing for mass repression in defence of the interests of the ruling class against a mass uprising of the working class and youth.

The Spanish population is suffering 24 percent unemployment, 56 percent among youth. A quarter of the active population are saddled with temporary jobs and 15 percent are part-time. There are nearly 2 million households where none of its members are working and 2.7 million people have been unemployed for more than two years. Spain now has the second-highest child poverty rate in the European Union after Romania. Wages have been slashed by an average of 7 percent, while gas, electricity and taxes on basic goods have increased.

The Spanish ruling class, along with its counterparts in Europe, fear that these conditions are inevitably leading to a social explosion, which the discredited parties and bureaucracies that have dominated the working class for such a long period are unable to contain.

The main trade unions, CCOO and UGT, have remained virtually silent over the past year. The Socialist Party (PSOE) is despised as a pro-austerity party no different to the PP that, along with the Communist Party-led United Left, has imposed drastic cuts in the regional governments they control.

The new pseudo-left party Podemos has emerged to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the major parties and is shifting further to the right on a weekly basis. It has backtracked on many of its promises to reverse austerity measures, met with the military, praised the Pope and accepted the need to repay the national debt.

Last month the internet daily Público revealed that 200 soldiers were carrying out a training exercise in preparation for their deployment in internal repression (see Spanish military prepares for domestic repression). Such is the nervousness of the state that four soldiers have been arrested for leaking photographs to Público.

What Spain is preparing is not unique to that country. In July, the European General Affairs Council adopted the “solidarity clause” that allows the European Union to “mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States,” if “a member state is affected by a terrorist attack, or a natural or man-made disaster.” This includes strikes, demonstrations or

uprisings endangering critical infrastructure, banks and corporations. (See EU advisors advocate use of military against strikes and protests)



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