

# Podemos backs state cover-up in Barcelona terror attack

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A year after the August 17, 2017 terror attacks in Barcelona, the Podemos party is joining in the official cover-up of state complicity in the attacks in Spain. While it is silent on new revelations of ties between the state and the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria militia that carried out the attack, it is demanding that the Spanish king, who was booed at last year's post-attack march for his ties to the Islamists, be allowed to lead this year's remembrance march.

Reports continue to surface making clear that the state had foreknowledge of the attack. Speaking last year to *El Pais*, Spain's National Intelligence Center (CNI) agency confirmed reports that the imam who masterminded the attack, Abdelbaki es-Satty, was a paid CNI informant until just before the attack. French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb also admitted that French intelligence tracked members of the Barcelona cell as they visited France less than a week before the attack.

Now, *El Pais* has revealed that *Guardia Civil* paramilitary police and CNI officials visited es-Satty no less than four times for "police interviews" while he served a four-year prison sentence for drug trafficking, before his release in 2014. These interviews took place in April, May and June 2012 and then March 2014. The serial numbers of the agents who visited him reportedly correspond to two *Guardia Civil* policemen for the first three visits, and two CNI agents for the last visit.

The *Mossos d'Esquadra*, the Catalan police, also collected all es-Satty's phone contacts while in jail and, according to *El Pais*, discovered the identity of "persons relevant" to the attack. One such was es-Satty's cellmate, Bennaceur Ameskeur, whose fingerprints were found on a dictionary in the house in Alcanar where the IS cell was preparing the attack. Bomb-making materials in the house exploded, killing

es-Satty, and prompting the IS cell to go into action.

Yesterday, it emerged that the lone survivor of the Barcelona terror cell, Mohamed Houli, told police that another IS terror cell exists in France. He said "eight or nine people ... were thinking of coming to Spain via Andorra, buying weapons and carrying out a terror attack in Lloret del Mar," near Spain's border with France. Houli has repeatedly confirmed this to the *Mossos d'Esquadra* and Judge Fernando Andreu.

These revelations are explosive. There is enormous anger in Barcelona at state complicity in the terror attacks that killed 16 people and wounded 152. It is widely recognized that the IS militia emerged with the tacit support of the NATO powers and the Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms amid NATO's war to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

A mass march attended by Spanish King Felipe VI in Barcelona shortly after the attack erupted into the largest demonstration so far in Europe of popular outrage at the imperialist wars that spawned the Islamist networks now carrying out terror attacks in Europe. As 500,000 people marched in Barcelona, the king was met with cries of "Your policies, our dead," "Get out!", and "Felipe, if you want peace, you don't do weapons trafficking."

The reaction of Podemos to these revelations and to the preparation of this year's remembrance march exposes the alignment of this populist, pseudo-left party with the police apparatus. It has made no appeal to anti-war sentiment and opposition to state criminality among masses of people. Instead, it is demanding that the population greet the king respectfully and insisting that he has a legitimate part to play in this year's remembrance of the attacks.

Speaking Tuesday on *Telecinco*, Podemos Senate spokesman and Madrid regional general secretary

Ramón Espinar demanded that the king lead the march, insisting it should be apolitical. He said, “Since Felipe VI is the head of state, he must attend this type of event, which has to do with a subject which is not political.”

Espinar criticized Catalan Regional president Quim Torra, who is refusing to invite Felipe VI to Barcelona, saying, “He is making another error. ... The subject of political struggle is the terrain of ideas, values and projects, not recollections of the victims of attacks.”

Making clear Podemos’ hostility to the eruption of anti-war sentiment last year, Espinar added that such marches “are not the time to put forward differences.” He said it should “be for all of us to solidarize with the victims, be it the head of state or whoever, and whatever ideology. ... Then when you go home, and you can be a monarchist, a republican, a secessionist or very Spanish, whatever you please.”

This is a blunt statement of support for the NATO war drive in the Middle East, and of opposition to rising anti-war sentiment in the working class. Espinar’s claim that terror vigils are “apolitical” is a fraud. IS attacks of which the state had foreknowledge were used to impose a state of emergency suspending basic democratic rights in France after the November 2015 Paris attacks, launch talks on imposing martial law in Spain last year, and ratchet up police powers in Germany, Belgium and Britain.

Espinar’s position is all the more significant, in that fear is growing in official circles about what will happen at this year’s remembrance march. After Felipe VI aggressively endorsed the mass police crackdown on peaceful voters in the October 1, 2017 Catalan independence referendum, the king is even more widely despised in Barcelona than a year ago.

Populist, pseudo-left parties like Podemos play a key role to suppress growing opposition to war and attacks on democratic rights, by covering up the state complicity and political criminality involved in the Syrian war and the European terror attacks. Based on affluent, pro-war sections of the middle class in academia, the media and the military-intelligence apparatus, they instinctively identify with the interests of European militarism.

Across the border in France, an ongoing investigation of multi-billion-euro construction firm Lafarge has exposed its close ties to IS. Magistrates charging

Lafarge executives with funding terrorist groups and complicity in crimes against humanity have shown that it worked closely with French intelligence and the Elysée presidential palace as it funneled tens of millions of euros to the Islamist extremists. The French partner of Podemos, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Unsubmissive France (LFI), has maintained a deafening silence on the state criminality exposed by the Lafarge scandal.

Recent reports have also documented that the US-backed Saudi war against Yemen relies on extensive use of Al Qaeda troops, and that the US puppet regime in Afghanistan protects IS troops.

This underscores the significance of the International Committee of the Fourth International’s (ICFI) call to build an international anti-war movement in the working class defending democratic rights, and its exposure of ties between NATO and its Islamist proxy militias in the Middle East. In this, it was fighting all the pseudo-left and nationalist organizations that support or accommodate to the imperialist war drive in the Middle East.

In Spain, this includes the Catalan nationalist groups that make up Torra’s regional government in Barcelona. After demanding investigations into the CNI’s ties to es-Satty in February in an attempt to calm down the situation, they accepted the CNI’s refusal of an investigation and, in March, a proposal by CNI officials to answer questions in a perfunctory closed-door hearing. Afterwards, Catalan nationalist deputy Jordi Xuclá emerged from the hearing and told the public that everything had been resolved.

Xuclá praised the information he had received from Spanish intelligence, absurdly declaring it was “substantial and communicated in an absolutely constructive way.”



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