

Outrage grows at Spanish media silence on state complicity in Barcelona attack

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22 July 2019

The media silence on online newspaper *Público*'s revelations that Spain's National Intelligence Center (CNI) intensively followed the Islamic State (IS) terror cell until the day of the Barcelona attacks in August 2017 is provoking growing outrage in Spain.

Público's report provides evidence of criminal behavior at top levels of the Spanish state. It directly contradicts official claims that the attackers evaded and even surprised Spanish and European intelligence. If the attackers were able to plan and execute such an attack, it was because CNI allowed the attack to proceed.

It comes from a well-established publication. According to a 2016 analysis by comScore, the web site *Público* has 7.5 million monthly readers. According to the same study, *Público* is among the ten most read dailies in Spain, with over one million followers on Facebook and 700,000 on Twitter.

Yet the response from the media to *Público*'s explosive report, from the openly right-wing newspapers to nominally "left" publications, is silence. The report has received almost no response in the national newspapers *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *El Español*, *La Razón* or *El País*. The same happened on radio channels SER, Cope and Onda Cero and on television. If reported, it has been to attack *Público*.

Crónica Global denounced *Público* for publishing the report, claiming that this makes it a tool of Catalan secessionists. It states that *Público*, "controlled by the well-known businessman and secessionist activist Jaume Roures," published a report without "any facts," which is being used by the Catalan nationalist movement that has "put all its machinery to work to hold the state responsible for the jihadist terrorist attacks."

Despite the official conspiracy of silence, however,

the report received mass circulation on social media, becoming a trending topic in Twitter last Tuesday. Hundreds of thousands of users shared the news in the following days. The news was also widely shared on Facebook.

Readers are heavily criticizing *eldiario.es*, which is aligned with the pseudo-left Podemos party. Created in 2012 and led by Ignacio Escolar, the founder and former director of *Público*, *eldiario.es*'s main journalists are former *Público* staff recruited after *Público* closed its paper edition in 2012. Over the years, *eldiario.es*'s readership grew thanks to the right-wing lurch of social-democratic papers like *El País* that cost them large numbers of readers.

Such was the anger at *eldiario.es*'s silence that Escolar had to issue a reply yesterday, titled "Why we did not publish the articles of *Público.es* about the CNI and the terrorists of La Rambla."

In it, he explains that "in recent days, as I usually do with these complaints, I have answered all those who have been interested in this topic and have written in. My first intention was to leave these answers private. But there are so many of you who are asking us about it through other channels—such as social media—that I have decided to explain this decision to all readers."

One reader cited by Escolar, José Fernández Montalbán, had written: "It is unfortunate to see how a newspaper like yours does not report a story as relevant as that published by the newspaper *Público*. If you have published anything, it must have been so hidden away that I have been incapable of finding it. I thought it was news with enough importance to appear in your newspaper. The plot [revealed by *Público*] is so big I'm surprised you have not made any mention of it. I understand that such media outlets like *OkDiario*, *ABC*, *La Razón* have ignored it, but you? In short, my

subscription [to *eldiario.es*] has an expiration date.”

Another *eldiario.es* subscriber, Álvaro Mateos Labrador, stated: “I just read the information that you probably know about the attack on La Rambla. *Público.es* states that the CNI agents knew all the activity of the terrorist cell that left several dead. I cannot understand how nothing has been done to report this information. Do you suspect it is fake news? As a subscriber, I think that at least we should have some explanation of why this information has not been covered by *eldiario.es*, given its relevance.”

Another, Rafael Sánchez Calahorro, wrote: “You have let me down as an independent newspaper that you claim to be by hiding the news of the Imam and the CNI. Are you also accomplices of the state’s silence? I believed that this only happened with mainstream media aligned with the regime. As of today, and sadly, I stop being a subscriber to your newspaper.”

Escolar claims *eldiario.es* ignored *Público*’s report because it does not prove that “the plan for the La Rambla massacre was known for certain by the CNI until the day of the attack,” nor that “the CNI listened to the motives of the murderers of La Rambla five days before the massacre,” nor that “the CNI erased the informant form from its database.”

Why, one would ask, have Escolar and *eldiario.es*, composed mostly of former *Público* staff, not contacted *Público*’s office or tried to independently confirm these explosive reports?

The reason becomes clear in his piece, when he covers for the intelligence services, stating: “It’s not unusual for some of the perpetrators of an attack to have been investigated by security forces or secret services. This is how many other terrorist attacks are prevented, even if it is not always achieved. This is what historically has happened in Europe and the United States with the main jihadist attacks.”

Escolar here baldly and complacently ignores the fact that in all the major IS attacks in Europe—as in the Charlie Hebdo and November 13 attacks in Paris in 2015, the Berlin Christmas attack, and the May 22 Manchester terror attack—the terrorists were known to law enforcement because they served as tools for the intelligence services and instruments of European imperialist wars in Syria and Iraq, and operated under official protection.

Eldiario.es is clearly serving as a tool of the Spanish

bourgeoisie in its attempt to cover up mounting evidence of state criminality.

Público’s report confirms the correctness of the WSWs analysis: these attacks are not “lapses,” but the product of the deep connections between IS terrorist networks and the intelligence agencies of Europe and the United States that emerged during the imperialist wars in Libya and Syria.



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