

# Right-wing campaign unfolds in Spain for November 10 elections

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4 November 2019

The run-up to the November 10 elections in Spain has seen the most right-wing campaign since the transition to parliamentary democracy in 1978, after the death of fascist dictator Francisco Franco. Millions of Spaniards are expected to vote with their feet next weekend, with expected record levels of abstention of around 35 percent.

With all the major parties determined to push through deeply unpopular policies of war and austerity, the election campaign has developed almost entirely around the theme of domestic repression. It has centred on promoting the police, public order and the fascist VOX party, while whipping up anti-Catalan sentiment amid mass protests in Catalonia against the jailing of Catalan nationalist political prisoners.

All the established parties have remained silent on the letter sent on October 15 by the acting PSOE government to the European Union Commission to lay out Spain's budget plan, committing the PSOE to deep austerity. Public health expenditure will be cut to 5.6 percent of the GDP, in line with cuts over the past 12 years. Education would remain frozen at 4 percent, the lowest figure since 2007. By the end of 2020, public spending would be cut a further 3.7 billion euros—though the European Commission is demanding 6.6 billion euros in cuts.

While the PSOE's agenda is wildly unpopular, all of the remaining parties know they would carry out similar policies were they to take power, and they consequently do not want to attack the PSOE for it.

Instead, acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has issued daily threats in the past weeks against the Catalan nationalists, making it the central axis of his campaign. Just this past week, he announced that police and intelligence services are investigating potential links between Catalan nationalists and social media

platforms used to promote the Catalan protests, some of which police closed down, charging “links to terrorism.”

Sánchez also appealed to the Constitutional Court to prosecute the speaker of the Catalan parliament, Roger Torrent, and members of the parliamentary bureau, for considering a resolution which raises the issue of self-determination and criticises the Spanish monarchy.

The week ended with Sánchez warning the Democratic Tsunami protest platform last Saturday night that if the protest actions it plans to call on the day of the vote take place, “we would be speaking about serious crimes against an electoral process.” The protest platform has already been partially blocked by Microsoft subsidiary GitHub at the request of Spain's Civil Guard, which sent an email saying Spain is “currently facing a series of riots involving serious public disorder and main infrastructure's sabotage.”

This hysterical campaign to promote anti-Catalan sentiment does not have mass support in the population. In La Coruña, a fascist attacked a grocer for selling Catalan pears. Sandra Castro, the owner of the business, described in television how a man “took me to the fruit boxes from Lleida [a Catalan region] and started to insult me ... He asked me how I could sell pears from Catalonia, was I not ashamed?” After a scuffle, the man punched Sandra twice in the face.

The public reaction to this assault underscores the broad unpopularity of the anti-Catalan campaign, and the explosive anger building in the working population against the entire ruling elite. Castro's grocery store received thousands of messages of support, and hundreds of clients came to buy “pears from Lleida,” finishing the stock in hours.

The right-wing Popular Party (PP), Citizens and far-right Vox are also making Catalonia the centre of their

campaign. Citizens calls for the immediate suspension of the Catalan regional government.

The PP has announced 15 measures to “re-impose constitutional order in Catalonia.” These include demanding the Catalan government “fulfill its constitutional obligations,” a step prior to invoking Article 155 of the Spanish constitution to suspend the regional government; using the National Security Law to take control of the Catalan police; prohibiting state financing of the Catalan nationalist parties’ campaigns, and inspecting public schools to block “secessionist indoctrination.”

The fascistic Vox party is the main beneficiary of this right-wing atmosphere, aided by the relentless media promotion and whitewashing of the party. It shot up after its leader Santiago Abascal was interviewed on *El Hormiguero*, a programme mixing comedy, science and guest interviews. He obtained a 23.5 percent screen share and 4 million viewers. The media greeted it with friendly articles like “One day in the campaign of Vox” (*La Vanguardia*), “A historian tries to offend Vox voters and fails miserably” (COPE) and “Vox deploys the ‘largest’ flag of Spain on a beach in Santander” (*La Sexta*).

Vox is campaigning on “100 measures to save Spain.” These include indefinitely suspending Catalan regional autonomy until “coup plotters have been defeated”; outlawing parties or groups that “destroy national unity”; prosecuting the desecration of national symbols; revoking the Law of Historical Memory which officially condemns Francoism; building an “impenetrable” wall in Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish colonial outposts in the north of Morocco; closing down “fundamentalist” mosques; deep cuts in public expenditure; tax cuts that will benefit the upper-middle classes and the rich; and banning undocumented migrants from public healthcare.

The PP and the PSOE are laying out the red carpet for Vox. The latest polls published by *El País* show Vox growing the most, from 24 to 46 seats (13.7 percent of the vote), and becoming the third political force in the 350-seat parliament. The PSOE would win the elections with 121 seats (27 percent of the vote), two less than in the April 2019 elections. Citizens would fall from 57 to 14 seats (8.3 percent of the vote) and the PP would rise from 66 to 91 (21.2 percent of the vote).

Amidst this right-wing campaign, the reaction of

Podemos and its right-wing split-off led by Podemos co-founder Iñigo Errejón, Más País (More Spain), is to suppress the explosive political anger in the working class and channel it behind the PSOE and its construction of a police state.

Leading Más País member Rita Maestre told *eldiario.org* her party aims to “have enough seats to force a progressive government” with the PSOE. She claimed “the PSOE usually needs a push to implement progressive measures, and that’s why Más País is useful.”

Podemos number two Irene Montero told *Cadena Ser*: “If the PSOE does not have an absolute majority, the logical thing is that there is a coalition government in Spain.” She added that “positions [of power] do not interest us, we want to change people’s lives and more when we are on the brink of an economic recession.”

Podemos’ support for the PSOE’s police-state campaign could lead to its worst-ever electoral results, according to polls. It could fall from 42 to 31 seats. Más País would receive 5 seats.

Five years after the founding of the party, Podemos has become key in aiding the Spanish ruling class in its suppression of growing demands for social equality that are driving mass protests by workers and youth around the world, from Ecuador to Chile, to Lebanon, Iraq and Hong Kong. When the workers and youth enter into struggle in Spain, this will rapidly lead to a political confrontation with the police-state machine that the ruling elite is furiously seeking to build.



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