

# Spain's rich and powerful secretly monopolised COVID-19 vaccines

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Generals, royalty and ministers in Spain have secretly been vaccinated for COVID-19, skipping the vaccine wait-list even as vaccines suddenly and inexplicably run out for frontline nurses. This theft of vaccines destined for critically vulnerable elderly people and health workers exposes the criminal class contempt underlying the European Union's (EU's) "herd immunity" policy.

The billionaire parasites, far-right generals and endlessly corrupt officials in Spain's ruling class each day needlessly send millions of workers and youth to risk infection and death, going to work and school in packed trains and trams. They refused to implement medically necessary lockdown orders in order to continue pumping corporate profits into the banks at the expense of lives. The lives they sacrifice are not, however, their own. While lecturing workers on "sacrifice" and the need to "save the economy," they have selfishly stolen vaccines to save themselves.

Yesterday, Defence Minister Margarita Robles (Spanish Socialist Party, PSOE) was compelled to pledge she would ask Chief of Staff General Miguel Angel Villarroya why he and numerous top military officials in Spain skipped the vaccine wait-list. *El Confidencial*, a news site with extensive sources in military circles, confirmed that other top staff officers, including General Francisco Braco and Lt. General Fernando García González-Valerio, had also been vaccinated.

Spain has also vaccinated soldiers participating in its imperialist military interventions abroad. The Defence Ministry has its own vaccination schedule, undisclosed to the public. It has enough doses for the nearly 1,000 soldiers in its warships deploying off Somalia. Thousands more are preparing for deployments to Lebanon, Iraq or Latvia. For the moment the vaccines are stored in a new, €5 million refrigerator, at the military base of Colmenar Viejo.

There is little doubt that broad sections of the financial

aristocracy have in fact secretly obtained access to vaccines, via the black market or other means. This was seen in the case of Iñaki Urdangarin, the brother-in-law of Spanish King Felipe VI, now serving a five-year prison sentence for his role in an embezzlement and financial corruption scandal.

Urdangarin was vaccinated because he works three days a week as a volunteer at a centre for people with disabilities. Significantly, he secured this job just three weeks ago, coinciding with the start of the vaccination campaign. On the same day, he was allowed third-degree prison regime, the lowest category within the prison system, allowing for day release. It raises the issue of whether his brother-in-law and commander of the armed forces, King Felipe VI, was also vaccinated.

High-ranking officials across Spain irregularly obtained the vaccine. In Murcia, one of the regions with the highest incidence rates—1,189 cases per 100,000—450 senior officials and family members working at the region's Health Ministry got the COVID-19 vaccine. This took 72 hours and was done in total secrecy. These were not frontline health workers. At the same time, the region's Ministry of Health refused to vaccinate 9,300 elderly people aged over 90, who were not considered a priority.

Murcia's health minister, Manuel Villegas, who was vaccinated with his wife, refused to resign for two days. He caved in only under mounting pressure—not before the regional premier, Fernando Lopez Miras, defended him as "exemplary" and his performance as "impeccable."

Irregular vaccinations of state officials took place in Spain's African enclave city of Ceuta and the regions of Valencia and Alicante. In Alicante province, the mayor of La Nucía and a local councillor got the vaccine. The mayor cynically argued that he has a medical degree.

At the same time, unexplained shortages are suddenly appearing in official stocks of COVID-19 vaccines in Spain. The lack of doses for health workers is particularly

criminal in that over 50,000 health workers have fallen ill, and 63 have died so far.

The regional government of Madrid has announced it will stop vaccinating frontline health workers fighting COVID-19 because it has run out of vaccines. Madrid health workers told *elDiario.es* many people have been vaccinated in hospitals over the past weeks. Sonia told the daily that she had an appointment at the health centre where she works as a nurse; however, “Today the coordinator sent us a message to tell us that it was being cancelled due to a shortage.”

The Madrid region has yet to say how it went from having one of the slowest regions’ vaccination rollouts—administering 14,000 doses or 14 percent of those received by January 9—to having now used 73 percent of its vaccines. This occurred while the region was brought to a standstill by a storm that coated it with snow. The obvious question is whether these vaccines were stolen in order to be illegally administered to wealthy, well-connected individuals.

The Spanish ruling elite’s vaccine theft come as, across Europe, cold weather and the emergence of new, deadlier variants of the coronavirus are leading to a staggering loss of life. Around 100,000 people die of COVID-19 every three weeks in Europe. There are currently 27,000 hospitalised cases in Spain, including 3,734 in intensive care, under conditions where the enforcing of back-to-work and back-to-school policies is set to claim even greater numbers of lives.

The official EU response to COVID-19 is hopelessly gangrened by an utterly corrupt, money-mad ruling class. While they implemented a “herd immunity” policy, fascistic moods and plans for a coup surged through the officer corps against workers’ strikes demanding a shut-down of non-essential industry. In now-leaked WhatsApp chats, senior officers said they were “good fascists” and called to “start shooting 26 million sons of b\*tches” to “extirpate the cancer” of left-wing sentiment.

Villaroya downplayed these chats, insisting the army “exquisitely accomplishes the mission laid out in the constitution” and hailed the “many sacrifices” made by army personnel.

In the final analysis, this corruption is rooted in the grotesque social inequality created by capitalism. A society in which the wealthiest individual (Zara owner Armancio Ortega, net worth €57 billion) is “worth” more than 3 million individuals in the bottom 50 percent is incapable of administering a rational, scientifically guided health policy. As revelations mount of widespread

irregular access by the rich to the vaccine, it is difficult to believe that Ortega and other billionaires across Europe have not also already been vaccinated.

The middle class, “left populist” Podemos party, which is in government with the PSOE, has made a few panicked calls for top officials implicated in the scandal to resign. Podemos deputy spokesperson and General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) Enrique Santiago tweeted: “If it’s true that the JEMAD [Chief of Staff Villaroya] has been vaccinated, he should resign or dismissed by the Prime Minister. ... If the MinDefence has designed a protocol that allowed officers to be vaccinated before the population or other high-risk soldiers, Robles should explain.”

Podemos Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz, who has spearheaded the back-to-work policy together with the union bureaucracy, said “all political leaders” who skipped protocols to be vaccinated “must resign immediately.”

In fact, after nearly a year in which Podemos has implemented the EU’s murderous “herd immunity” policy, the question that is posed is what Podemos knew about illegal elite vaccinations and, indeed, whether Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias or other Podemos officials were illegally vaccinated.

The central political lesson of this scandal is that the pandemic cannot be fought through the European political establishment. It requires the mobilisation of workers and youth, organised independently from the unions in workplaces and schools, in a political movement fighting for equality and for socialism. The only viable perspective for such a movement is to transfer power from the financial aristocracy to the working class.

In November, the PSOE-Podemos government announced its Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy to great fanfare. This plan divided the Spanish population into 15 groups in order to administer vaccinations during 2021 in three phases. In the first phase, from January to March, 2.5 million people were to be vaccinated, including nursing care home residents and staff, health workers and people with serious disabilities.



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