

PSOE-Podemos facilitates fascist attacks on migrants in Canary Islands

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Recent weeks have seen a series of violent attacks by far-right thugs against migrants stranded on the Spanish Canary Islands. Various WhatsApp chats and videos have also been leaked to the press in which far-right individuals discussed plans to kill and maim migrant workers.

The fascist Vox bears direct responsibility for these incitements to violence, but the groundwork for the attacks has been laid by Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government which has lobbied for European Union funds to support Moroccan police operations to terrorise migrants.

Migrants who manage to arrive on makeshift boats in the Canary Islands are placed into concentration camps, their children separated from mothers, prevented from flying to the peninsula and then deported as fast as possible.

This policy is based on the fascistic notion of the "call effect," i.e., that treating migrants humanely will provoke new waves of migrants. Therefore, the policy of the entire political establishment in Spain, backed by the European Union, is to brutalise migrants. Physical assaults by fascist thugs or the police at the borders are therefore, unofficially at least, a part of the policy.

In an audio message on a WhatsApp chat leaked to news site *La Marea*, one man says: "This is a government of shit, bro, but it's gonna end. From tomorrow, we're gonna go out hunting. A group of four or five Moors together: beating time." In another chat, an image of two pistols was shared, accompanied by the ominous caption: "These two are coming to Maspalomas [a town on the island of Gran Canaria, where a number of migrants are currently accommodated]."

Participants in another chat can be seen to discuss plans for this "hunt," with one threateningly declaring:

"Tomorrow we're gonna go down there and we're going to bust them [the migrants] up. At least 15 guys are ready. They're gonna go crazy. We're armed up to here. The Moors are gonna die, I'm telling you this straight."

This is not the first reported incident of far-right threats or violence against migrant workers on the Canary Islands. In December, dozens of fascistic individuals from the town of Mogán, Gran Canaria, gathered outside hotels housing migrants to scream insults and threats at them. Police were called to the scene but no arrests were made.

The Red Cross, which helps to run many of the migrant reception facilities on the Canary Islands, was forced to advise migrants not to leave their accommodations for the next 48 hours.

The most recent far-right rants on WhatsApp are not empty threats. Numerous injuries to migrant workers have already been reported in the Spanish press, and multiple formal complaints have been lodged with the police.

One migrant worker, Hassan, told *elDiario.es* that a group of men fired a pellet gun at him from inside a car, with one man making threatening gestures with a "machete," miming slitting his throat. A man was arrested as part of an investigation into the alleged "machete" threats but was subsequently released. In a video of the incident leaked to *La Marea*, the assailant can be heard exclaiming: "I'm going to teach a lesson to the first little Moor [I see]."

Nineteen-year-old Ahmad also told *elDiario.es* that he had been beaten by "eight boys" while out on a walk with three friends, with one of them hitting him with a metal baton. "They dragged me across the floor and hit me in various parts of the body," he said.

Another Moroccan youth, Oussman, described to the

same news site how he had been hit on the back while out for a walk with a friend. After beginning to run away from their attackers, Oussman tripped and fell and was then surrounded by “four or five men” who kicked and hit him. He received injuries to his jaw and leg. “I couldn’t sleep for three nights. I had a lot of pain in my mouth. I couldn’t eat,” he said .

Público also reported that at least three migrants at a reception facility run by the White Cross Foundation had received injuries to their heads after rocks were thrown at them outside their accommodations. Other young migrants report being hit on the head, kicked or beaten when going out to take a walk, having to run for their lives to escape the attacks.

The most recent attacks on migrants came in the wake of a far-right campaign of hoax videos on WhatsApp and social media, falsely purporting to show migrants in the Canary Islands robbing shops, churches or restaurants.

The videos of ethnic minority youth—none of whom were in fact migrants or in the Canary Islands—were circulated across these online platforms, accompanied by captions such as, “When you introduce thousands of illegal [migrants] with no jobs into your country” and “Look what the ‘grateful’ immigrants who we have housed, looked after and fed in the Canary Islands are doing.”

These efforts to depict migrants as criminals were enthusiastically promoted by the far-right Vox party, which launched a xenophobic “Stop Islamicisation!” campaign on Twitter. “They [migrants] make up approximately 0.2 percent [of the population] and are responsible for 93% of complaints,” Vox declared, with no evidence on its official Twitter account. “The majority are from the Maghreb,” it continued, echoing the threats against “Moors.”

Twitter temporarily suspended Vox’s account for “inciting hate” over these tweets, prompting Vox leader Santiago Abascal to launch into another anti-immigrant tirade, writing: “Of course, the tweet which provoked the censorship provided data about the violence which Spaniards are suffering. The tech millionaires don’t want us to know the consequences of the migrant invasion which they are promoting along with some governments.”

Vox’s anti-migrant agitation has been supported by the PSOE-Podemos government. While it cynically

declared that “we’re not going to accept hoaxes, images from other places, old videos published as current or false complaints,” its delegate to the Canary Islands, Anselmo Pestana Padrón, stated that migrants with “bad behaviour” would be subject to priority deportation. Many of these migrants have been “directly repatriated,” he said, while others have been transferred to the Immigration Detention Centres.

According to the Red Cross, at least 70 migrants were deported in the last week of January for supposed “bad behaviour.”

The PSOE-Podemos government is dutifully stepping up its efforts to rapidly deport migrants in line with Vox’s calls. In December, Vox leader Abascal declared in parliament that the government must “prevent any more illegal migrants from passing and demand their immediate and forcible deportation if it’s necessary.”

The government reacted by recently signing a deal with Air Maroc to carry out three deportation flights a week from the Canary Islands to Morocco. In mid-January, the Spanish Interior Ministry also pledged €10.89 million for charter flights to deport migrants over 18 months.

At the same time, it is refusing entry at its border to hundreds of thousands of migrants. In 2019 before the impact of COVID-19, nearly 500,000 migrants were refused entry. The effective shutting off of the direct migration route across the Mediterranean from Morocco, with the assistance of the European Union, has forced migrants to risk the far more dangerous sea crossing to the Canary Islands. Migration to the Canary Islands increased by 1,670 percent this January, as compared to the same month last year.

The bloody result of the “call effect” policy has led to the deaths of at least 2,000 migrants on this crossing in 2020, for which the PSOE-Podemos government bears direct responsibility.



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