

Podemos, Spanish officials receive death threats signed by security forces

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Podemos general secretary Pablo Iglesias, who recently stepped down as Deputy Prime Minister to run in the Madrid regional election, has received letters containing death threats and bullets.

On Thursday, Iglesias posted on Twitter an anonymous letter the Ministry of Interior received for him. It said: “Pablo Iglesias Turrion, you have let our parents and grandparents die. Your wife, your parents and you are sentenced to the capital punishment, your time is running out.” The letter came with four CETME bullets, a rifle used by the Spanish Army, Navy, Civil Guard and National Police.

Interior Minister Fernando Grandes-Marlaska and the government-appointed head of the Civil Guard police force, María Gámez, received similar letters. Marlaska’s letter said: “You have 10 days to resign. The days of laughing at us are over. National Police. Civil Guard. Time is not on your side for the *taponazos* [police slang for loud gunshots].” The envelope contained two 7.62x51 mm bullets. Gámez received a similar message a day earlier, with the same type of bullet and references to “*taponazos*.”

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) condemns these letters, which bear all the hallmarks of coming from far-right members of the Spanish security forces. The ICFI has unbridgeable, extensively documented political differences with Podemos, which has implemented “herd immunity” policies that have caused mass deaths in Spain. However, we call on workers and youth to oppose death threats against Podemos, especially those influenced by far-right parties that have also advocated and implemented “herd immunity” policies.

These are the latest in a stream of threats against Iglesias’ life, coinciding with rising fear in ruling circles of workers’ opposition to “herd immunity”

policies on the COVID-19 pandemic. After mass strikes in Italy and across Europe compelled Madrid to agree to a lockdown last spring, fascistic Spanish officers close to the far-right Vox party began conspiring to launch a coup. This went hand-in-hand with hysterical denunciations by right-wing parties of “reds” and “communists.”

Multiple leaked messages on officers’ private WhatsApp chat groups revealed the extent of fascist sympathies in the army. Retired generals and colonels proclaimed their loyalty to fascism, boasted of links to active-duty officers and Vox, and called for a coup to murder “26 million” left-wing Spaniards. Chats of active-duty officers expressed support for the fascist retired generals, calling Iglesias a “hunchbacked rat.”

Far-right pickets have been organised daily in front of Iglesias’ house, with some fascists actually prosecuted for entering his property. Last summer, Iglesias cut short his holidays in northern Spain after being hounded by fascists. A former member of La Legión, an elite military unit, was filmed shooting live ammunition at a photograph of Iglesias in an armoury.

In recent weeks, these attacks have intensified. Podemos party headquarters in Cartagena was firebombed, its windows sprayed with obscene graffiti and the word “Rojos” (reds, a derogatory term used by fascists). The Interior Ministry has reinforced Iglesias’ security, due to a risk of an attack during the regional elections. He is guarded by police snipers stationed atop rooftops, unprecedented protection for a Spanish regional election candidate.

At a pre-election debate held at Cadena SER radio, Iglesias walked out of the studio shortly after the debate began, when Vox candidate Rocío Monasterio refused to condemn the letter. She said, “Well, I believe little of what Pablo Iglesias says.” When it came his turn to

speak Iglesias called on Monasterio to rectify her words or he would leave. Monasterio refused, saying: “If you are so brave, get up and leave, and leave Spain too.” Iglesias left.

Vox leader Santiago Abascal supported Monasterio and trivialized the death threats against Iglesias, saying that the letter “stinks of a set-up.” He also mocked Iglesias in feminist terms for leaving the debate, calling Iglesias a “little alpha male” who cannot stand “if a woman contradicts him.”

Such threats constitute a serious warning. While Iglesias, Grandes-Marlaska and Gámez are the immediate targets of the death threats, their political target is the growing anger in the working class against deadly “herd immunity” policies implemented in Spain and internationally.

There is deep, historically rooted opposition to fascistic forces and “herd immunity” policies in the European working class. However, this can only be mobilized if it is organized independently of the union bureaucracies and based on Marxist opposition to pseudo-left parties like Podemos. Indeed, a key reason far-right forces feel emboldened to act is that the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government has consistently followed a political agenda set by Vox, providing political cover for coup plotters.

The PSOE-Podemos government ruthlessly implemented the EU’s “herd immunity” policy, leaving over 100,000 dead and 3.4 million infected of COVID-19 in Spain. Amid a fourth wave, fuelled by variants, it bowed this month to Vox’s demands to end social distancing measures over the coming weeks, condemning thousands more to unnecessarily die. It is also preparing to enact pension cuts, labour reforms and other austerity measures dictated by a €140 billion European Union (EU) bailout, which passed in parliament thanks to votes from Vox.

This money will be funnelled to the financial aristocracy, which made billions from the pandemic as “hunger queues” became common in Spanish cities. According to *Forbes*, Spain’s billionaires club has gone from 24 to 30 during the pandemic, with its net worth rising from \$97.1 billion last year to \$137 billion, led by Amancio Ortega’s fortune of \$71.3 billion.

Yet, in a further reactionary gesture, PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez hailed Vox’s vote for EU bailouts as “statesmanlike.”

In fact, amid the bourgeoisie’s murderous response to the pandemic and escalating social inequality, democratic forms of rule are collapsing across America and Europe. It has been nearly two years since German politician Walter Lübcke was shot in cold blood in his house by neo-Nazis for his pro-refugee stance. In the US, a plot to assassinate Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer brought to light a nationwide far-right terror network, just months before then-US President Donald Trump’s January 6, 2021 coup attempt involving sections of the US military and the Republican Party.

Just as the Democratic Party has worked furiously to cover up Trump’s coup attempt, Podemos and the PSOE have downplayed coup threats in Spain and across Europe. On Twitter, referring to his death threats, Iglesias wrote: “There has been no consequence for the retired officers who spoke of shooting 26 million Spaniards for being reds. How will they not feel absolute impunity to send us death threats with bullets from an assault rifle?”

One must reply to Iglesias that he bears considerable political responsibility for far-right impunity. Last December, he publicly downplayed these dangers on television, while social media boiled with anger over fascist threats to kill tens of millions. In a prime-time interview, he brazenly insisted: “What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat.”

Soon after, this was exposed as lie. Videos emerged of active-duty Spanish soldiers singing fascist songs, and active-duty officers embraced retired generals’ calls to kill “26 million” in leaked chats.

La Marea recently interviewed an officer who, in a distorted voice to guard against retaliation, said: “We have denounced the existence of a neo-Nazi cell in the Army, and the [the Ministry of Defence] response has been nil.” The army has responded by trying to identify the leakers of the report detailing neo-Nazi networks in the army, but in order to expel the leakers. The PSOE-Podemos government has made no attempt to stop this reactionary proceeding.



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