

Migrants killed and wounded by far-right attacks in Spain

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On Sunday, June 13, Moroccan migrant Younes Bilal was murdered by a retired soldier in the Spanish town of Mazarrón, in the southeastern region of Murcia. The 52-year-old assailant, identified only as Carlos Patricio B.M., reportedly shouted “fucking Moors!” (a slur against people of North African origin) as he shot Bilal three times in the chest at point-blank range.

Bilal had been meeting with friends at a café in Mazarrón when B.M. allegedly began verbally abusing one of the café’s waitresses, screaming at her for speaking “with a group of Muslims.” After Bilal got up to defend the waitress, Carlos reportedly stormed out, returning 20 minutes later with a gun and shooting Bilal dead.

Only a couple of days later, an Ecuadorian woman was stabbed as she queued outside a food bank in the town of Santa Lucía de Cartagena, also in Murcia. The attacker allegedly screamed: “*Sudaca!* [A derogatory term for a woman from South America] Immigrants are stealing our food!” as she drove a knife into the woman’s back. The unnamed victim had to be hospitalised, but fortunately survived.

Yesterday, it was reported that Momoun Koutaibi, a 22-year-old Moroccan auto mechanic, is still in a coma after someone struck his head with an iron bar on the job on June 5. Another 40-year-old Moroccan citizen was also stabbed last Tuesday in Cartagena.

The “progressive” Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government bears political responsibility for the recent upsurge in xenophobic, anti-migrant attacks in Spain. Their brutal crackdown on immigration has provided a fertile breeding ground for far-right, racist agitation against refugees, and given unofficial state backing to fascistic forces to turn to violence with increasing frequency.

Under the aegis of the PSOE-Podemos government, migrants and refugees who make it to the Spanish Canary

Islands on makeshift rafts and boats are held in appalling conditions in camps. Children are separated from their mothers, and underage migrants are subjected to invasive “medical” tests to determine their age—including forcing them to strip naked and undergo examinations of their genitalia.

At least two minors have died in Spanish centres for unaccompanied and underage migrants in recent weeks. One of the minors, a 17-year-old boy from Morocco housed in a centre in Écija, Seville, for three years, died of a “pulmonary edema,” *elDiario.es* reported. The other young man, whose age was unknown, apparently committed suicide at the Miguel de Mañara de Montequinto centre in Seville.

The brutal attacks in Murcia are only the latest in a series of increasingly violent assaults targeting migrants and refugees in Spain. In February, a mosque in the Murcian town of San Javier was defaced with graffiti reading “Death to Islam.” The attacker also attempted to set fire to the building, but was arrested before the blaze could catch hold.

Earlier this year, several migrants trapped on the Canary Islands were injured when fascist thugs attacked them with pellet guns, machetes, rocks and metal batons. At the time, various WhatsApp chats and videos were leaked to the press in which far-right individuals discussed plans to kill and maim migrant workers. One used the messaging platform to declare: “The Moors are gonna die, I’m telling you this straight.”

The immediate spark of the assaults on the Canary Islands was a campaign of far-right hoax videos on social media and WhatsApp, falsely purporting to show migrants in the Canary Islands robbing shops, churches or restaurants. These efforts to depict migrants as criminals were promoted by the fascist Vox party, which launched a xenophobic “Stop Islamicisation!” campaign on Twitter, blaming a supposed wave of crime on a migrant

“invasion.”

While these horrific acts of violence are incited by the far right, they have been facilitated by vicious anti-migrant policies of the PSOE-Podemos government. It built a vast network of concentration camps across Spain, and particularly on the Canary Islands, in which migrants are deliberately imprisoned in unsanitary, inhumane conditions pending deportation.

In mid-June, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Doctors of the World issued a scathing report on the conditions inside detention camps on the Canary Islands, denouncing the overcrowding, poor nutrition and spread of disease in these facilities. According to the report, many migrants in these centres suffered from anxiety attacks, insomnia, constipation, vomiting, diarrhoea, outbreaks of scabies, fungi, chilblains, headaches or back pain.

Overcrowding, lack of medical attention and poor sanitation facilities had made these camps ideal environments for the spread of COVID-19. Doctors of the World emphasised: “In the majority of these Emergency centres ... people sleep 30 to a tent without the minimum safety distance of a metre and a half [being respected], while the lack of hygiene conditions means there is a significant risk of contagion.”

Separately, anonymous workers at an immigration centre run by the NGO Fundación Responsabilidad Social Siglo XXI wrote to the Mogán City Council (Gran Canaria) on June 10, claiming sexual and physical abuse of minors and adults was widespread at the facility. They alleged that prostitution of underage migrants was occurring and denounced site management for “allowing repeated and unjustified psychological and physical attacks on young people, ranging from insults and harassment to intimidation and physical restraints.”

The squalid living conditions and proliferation of sexual violence are not accidental consequences of a sudden influx of migrants or of the excesses of unscrupulous camp staff. They flow directly from the policy pursued by the PSOE-Podemos government, backed by the European Union, based on the reactionary notion of a “pull factor”—i.e., that humane treatment of migrants should be discouraged, as it would only encourage more to come.

Only weeks before the attacks in Murcia, the PSOE-Podemos government, backed by the European Union (EU), deployed the army to drive back migrants seeking to cross the border between Morocco and Spain’s North African enclave of Ceuta. Thousands of migrants attempted to cross into the enclave in only a few hours,

with most swimming around the six-metre fence that juts out into the sea, or walking across at low tide.

In response, the Spanish government sent in hundreds of soldiers in armoured vehicles, and mobilised over 200 riot police to reinforce the 1,000-strong police force already stationed in Ceuta. Soldiers and police used batons to clear migrants from the beach and threw smoke bombs to discourage others from crossing. At least one migrant drowned in the sea.

Echoing the rhetoric of Vox, PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez denounced the influx of migrants as “an attack on Spain’s borders.” Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo accused Morocco of “aggression.”

The PSOE-Podemos government already has the blood of thousands of migrants on its hands. With the Spanish ruling elite effectively shutting off any legally sanctioned migration route into the country, the Canary Island sea crossing has become the most deadly route into Europe, surpassing the Mediterranean Sea crossings to Italy and Greece, which have claimed tens of thousands of lives over the last years.

According to the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR) charity, at least 850 migrants died trying to reach the Canary Islands in 2020—fully 60 percent of the 1,417 who died on the way to Europe last year.

Horrific as these figures already are, they are widely acknowledged to be a significant underestimate of the true scale of the slaughter. Other NGOs calculate that over 2,000 migrants died on the Canary Island route alone last year. According to CEAR’s figures, four times as many migrants drown attempting the sea crossing to the Canary Islands, as a proportion of all the migrants arriving on the islands, than on any other route to Europe.



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