

Spain's Morenoite Izquierda Diario calls for "safe nightlife" as COVID-19 surges

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Amid a massive resurgence of coronavirus cases in Spain, the Morenoite Workers' Revolutionary Current (CRT), and its online publication *Izquierda Diario*, has launched a politically-criminal campaign encouraging youth to throw caution to the wind and pour back into nightclubs and bars.

Infection rates have surged in Spain, with daily cases more than quadrupling in two weeks. As of yesterday, the seven-day rolling average of cases was 24,049, compared to 3,574 a month ago, and more than at any point since mid-February. On July 15, Spain recorded 32,680 new cases of COVID-19, the most reported on any single day since the beginning of the pandemic in February 2020.

Young people have so far borne the brunt of the upsurge of the pandemic, with incidence rates among this age group many times the national average of 600 cases per 100,000. Among adolescents aged 12 to 19, this figure is 1,488 youth infected per 100,000. For those 20 to 29 years of age, it hit a catastrophic 1,794 per 100,000, nearly one in every 50 individuals. This raises the dangers that COVID-19 fatalities will mount among those under 30, and also that infection rates will mount among older, more vulnerable layers of the population.

In line with the policies pursued by the ruling elite across Europe, Spain's "progressive" Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government is pursuing an unrestrained "herd immunity" policy, declaring its intention not to implement any life-saving health measures, even in the face of this massive upsurge in infections.

A week ago, PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez ruled out imposing further measures on the national scale, stating that the powers handed to the devolved regional governments already enabled them to "give a series of responses" to the pandemic. "It is not necessary," Sánchez insisted, "to approve any more [measures] than what is agreed by the Ministry of Health with the regions."

Much of this new wave of infections has been triggered by the reopening of bars and nightclubs across the country, with young people encouraged to return to these venues under the lying pretext that they are safe and that there is a low chance of a new surge of the virus. Many cases have been linked to end-of-term trips by students to tourist destinations such as Mallorca.

Nighttime entertainment venues were reopened in June with an announcement by the Spanish government's Inter-territorial Council of the National Health System (CISNS). Nightclubs and bars were permitted to open until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., with social distancing and capacity limitations nominally in place, but which many regions have largely ignored.

Despite the obvious and growing health risk posed by the reopening of these facilities, the Morenoite CRT has not only refused to call for the closure of unsafe, non-essential businesses such as nightclubs, but has actively called for them to remain open and encouraged attendance. This is justified with the pathetic statement: "Young people have the right to enjoy themselves."

While attempting to mask their position behind supposed opposition to the scapegoating of young people for the surge in infections, the CRT's July 1 piece, titled "The fifth wave sparks another campaign of criminalisation of young people," is an unabashed call for the ending of any social distancing policy.

"Combatting this fifth wave can't happen through criminalisation, persecution and new confinements of youth," the *Izquierda Diario* article asserts.

"It's time to demand a safe return of social, cultural and educational life," the piece continues, "with measures that guarantee safe leisure, with mass antigen testing at the expense of the bosses who generously profit from nightlife and youth entertainment, with the extension and intensification of the vaccination campaign to all age groups and the demand for the freeing up of all the patents

which are possible, not only in the Spanish state but across the whole planet, especially in semi-colonial countries where the active waves continue to cause genuine havoc with tens of thousands of daily deaths.”

Calls to make such venues “safe” by regularly testing young people and expanding vaccination campaigns amount to no more than window dressing for the CRT’s embrace of a policy of throwing open the economy and junking social distancing measures. Testing and vaccination campaigns alone are wholly insufficient to combat the spread of infection. They must be part of a widespread campaign to reduce social contact, primarily through the closing of non-essential workplaces, to halt the contagion.

“The blame for this outbreak has been attributed to the ‘relaxed’ and ‘irresponsible’ attitude of all the youth that travelled with their friends,” the Izquierda Diario article continues. “However, holding mass events without the necessary health measures, which young people and adolescents who have gone more than a year with their social lives reduced or cancelled are obviously going to attend, is the joint responsibility of the [central and regional] administrations and the big entertainment bosses.”

Although the CRT postures as a critic of the policies of the PSOE-Podemos government and big business, in reality their position aligns with that of the government in all its fundamentals. Their calls for a return to nightlife show that they have fully lined up behind the ruling elite’s criminal policy of learning to “live with the virus.”

While briefly acknowledging that incidence rates have gone up among young people in recent weeks, the July 1 article makes no mention of the drastic implications of this surge in infections. The enormous risks still posed by the virus, of hospitalisation and death, of long-term incapacitation (long COVID) and of the possible emergence of new and potentially deadlier variants, are passed over in silence by the CRT.

The Morenoites have largely ignored the pandemic in recent months, with Izquierda Diario publishing next to nothing on the health and social catastrophe facing millions of people in Spain and billions across the world. What few statements their website has issued have been characterised by opposition to a scientifically guided campaign to eradicate the virus and indifference to the tens of thousands of lives lost and thousands more affected by severe and long-term illness.

In January, the CRT published an article in Izquierda Diario, sarcastically titled “More restrictions, the recipe

for confronting the third wave,” in which it denounced necessary public health measures such as lockdowns and social distancing as “authoritarian and palliative.” “As if it were a tap,” the Morenoites declared, “they [the PSOE-Podemos government] are limiting our liberties and movements at their will.”

In May, as the PSOE-Podemos government ended the state of alarm—the juridical mechanism allowing regional governments to impose coronavirus health measures such as lockdowns, curfews and mobility restrictions—the CRT made no criticism of this reckless endangerment of the lives of millions of workers in Spain. Their analysis of the ending of the state of alarm merely explained which measures regional governments would and would not be able to impose, and made no warnings of the serious health risks nor demands for continued efforts to combat the pandemic.

The CRT’s opposition to measures to contain the pandemic is not simply a passing error or confusion. It reflects the material class interests upon which this tendency is based. The Morenoites speak for well-off layers of the upper middle class and members of the union bureaucracy, whose positions and lifestyles depend on the upward movement of stock markets and the continued exploitation of workers. These interests are incompatible with public health measures such as social distancing and the closure of non-essential businesses, which impinge on the profit interests of corporations large and small.

Against the reactionary, anti-scientific policies of the CRT and other pseudo-left organisations, the International Committee of the Fourth International has consistently fought for a fully funded programme of health and social measures to combat the pandemic. A genuine, scientifically led struggle to eradicate the coronavirus cannot be achieved outside of a frontal assault on the capitalist system, which prioritises profit making above all else. This requires a political break with all the representatives of the pseudo-left, as part of an independent struggle by workers and youth for socialism in Spain and internationally.



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