

Podemos acquiesces to Spanish police persecution of second lawmaker

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Spain's High Court has convicted Alberto Rodríguez, Podemos lawmaker and former organization secretary of the party, on fraudulent charges of abuse of a police officer, sentenced him to a month and 15 days in jail and a €540 fine. The conviction also disqualifies him from public office, threatening him with the loss of his parliamentary seat. A decision must be made in the coming days by Spain's Central Electoral Board.

Rodríguez was convicted without a single piece of evidence of kicking a police officer in a protest in La Laguna, the Canary Islands, in 2014. This comes after Madrid regional lawmaker for Podemos, Isabel Serra, was convicted of insulting a police officer and throwing objects at police and sentenced to 19 months in jail. Both convictions were based solely on police testimony and medical reports.

In Rodríguez's case, the High Court judges state in their ruling that the officer "did not express any doubt" when identifying him, something they claimed was reinforced by the "absence of animosity" towards the lawmaker by the policeman and his persistence. The principal evidence is the medical report after the police officer went to the doctor to register his knee ailment as an attack.

In March, Serra's appeal of her 19-month sentence was rejected. Like Rodríguez, she was convicted of throwing objects and insulting an officer. While it was not even proven that she was there, the judges ruled: "We have no doubt about the certainty of the recognition of the accused." They also cited medical reports, claiming that "The reality of the injuries suffered and the damages caused" are proven.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) opposes the persecution of Rodríguez and Serra. It has unbridgeable political differences with Podemos, which is sitting in government in Spain, prioritizing profits over human lives amid the COVID-19 pandemic which has left over 100,000 dead in Spain. Podemos is

also responsible for deepening social attacks on the working class, supporting imperialist wars and carrying out mass police repression.

However, the sentences against Serra and Rodríguez—six years and seven years, respectively after the alleged events took place—amount to an attempt by the Spanish bourgeoisie to install a police-state climate to intimidate any form of political opposition.

A dangerous precedent is being created, threatening to de facto eliminate the presumption of innocence. A police officer can accuse a lawmaker, striker or protester. Then, simply on the say-so of the officer and a medical report, the judge imposes a jail sentence and a fine.

Police agencies are not neutral arbiters, as routinely presented by the bourgeois media. As Frederick Engels wrote, they are the "special bodies of armed men" created to defend capitalist property, inequality and class rule. Many policemen and judges are unabashed supporters of the neo-fascist Vox party.

It is well known that local police, National Police and Civil Guard are among Vox's main constituencies. The National Police's main union, Justicia Salarial Policial (Jusapol), was created in 2017 amid the hysterical state campaign against the Catalan independence referendum. Vox's leadership regularly participates in Jusapol protests calling for higher wages for policemen.

As for the judiciary, it has repeatedly aligned itself with Vox and passed rulings to rehabilitate Francoism. In the past year alone, courts have issued a spate of reactionary rulings, such as siding with Vox' appeal to stop any restrictions on the spread of COVID-19, absolving a fascist leader's anti-Semitic statements and opposing the changing of street names honoring fascist military units and leaders.

The Supreme Court, the court that has sentenced Rodríguez to jail, endorsed Franco's 1936 coup, while the Constitutional Court ruled that Franco did not commit

crimes against humanity during the war or his 40-year dictatorship.

If these forces, which represent an insignificant section of the population, can determine national politics, its due to the role of Podemos. It is sitting in government supporting police state measures, while acquiescing to the persecution of its members and lawmakers.

When Isabel Serra was condemned by Madrid's Higher Court last year, before her appeal was rejected earlier this year, the WSWS noted: "The party leadership has acquiesced to the verdict and done everything it can to signal that it will organise no opposition to the emerging police state in Spain—over which it rules, in fact, in coalition with the Spanish Socialist party (PSOE)." We quoted Podemos leader, Pablo Iglesias, who said: "Sentences must be accepted (and in this case appealed), but a huge sense of injustice invades me."

A year later, Iglesias' successor, Yolanda Díaz, who is also deputy prime minister of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government, stated that Rodríguez had all her "solidarity," adding: "In the first place, we respect all judicial rulings as always. I know that the lawmaker is going to file an appeal and, therefore, we are waiting for final resolution."

Such statements further align Podemos with the police state. In reality, Podemos is under no obligation to accept a reactionary sentence. It could call on its 3 million voters and 18,000 members to mobilize against the reactionary ruling. Instead, it accepts a reactionary sentence without any significant opposition. Such a reaction only serves to embolden Vox and its allies in the army and security forces to escalate their attacks.

Podemos' incapacity to oppose the persecution of its members flows directly from its class character. Speaking for layers of the upper middle class, it employs democratic phraseology to attract popular support and then channel it towards the Socialist Party (PSOE), the bourgeoisie's main party of government since the fascist Francoite regime fell in 1978. The PSOE has a decades-long record as a party of imperialist war and European Union (EU) austerity.

Once in power, Podemos plays the same role, claiming that any measure passed by the PSOE-Podemos government is radical and progressive. In fact, its agenda is socially reactionary. It claims to be pursuing a scientific policy on the COVID-19 pandemic, while allowing the virus to spread; endorses EU bailouts of the financial aristocracy as measures to improve workers' lives; and claims that raising the retirement age will preserve the

pension system.

In reality, mass anger is building against the PSOE-Podemos government and the disastrous impact of its policies on the working class. Over the past year, nurses, doctors, railway workers, educators, bus drivers, autoworkers, metalworkers, and many other sectors have been involved in strikes and protests. Virtually every layer of the working class is involved in a broader upsurge of the class struggle that is proceeding in Spain and internationally.

In the US, thousands of workers are on strike. These include Deere workers, auto workers, Kellogg's cereal workers, nurses and health care workers, distillery workers, coal miners and carpenters. In South Africa, 155,000 metalworkers launched an indefinite strike last week.

Terrified that defending its lawmakers could encourage broader opposition, Podemos prefers giving a green light to its own persecution, aware that it relies on state security forces against the workers. In government, Podemos has already attacked steelworkers striking for better COVID-19 protection measures, sent the police to attack Airbus workers, deployed the army against fleeing refugees and migrants, and incarcerated Catalan nationalists over peaceful protests.

Podemos' time in government marks another bitter experience of the working class with so-called "left populist" parties after the 2015-2019 pro-austerity Syriza ("Coalition of the Radical Left") government in Greece. The decisive question facing workers and youth in Spain and internationally opposing the official handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, austerity, war and military-police repression is a decisive political break with these pseudo-left parties.



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