Massacre in Morocco: The ugly face of European imperialism

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28 June 2022

The savage killing of at least 37 refugees on the border between Morocco and the Spanish exclave of Melilla underscores the brutality and disregard of basic democratic rights that pervades the European Union. As the US-NATO war with Russia rapidly escalates into a global conflagration, and workers across the continent move into struggle against the unbearable cost of living and the ruling elite's murderous pandemic policy, the major European powers are resurrecting forms of state-organised violence and political reaction not seen since Europe's domination by authoritarian and fascist regimes during the 1930s.

The barbaric massacre was carried out through the combined efforts of the Spanish Civil Guard and Moroccan gendarmerie on Friday. The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) reported that the migrants came mostly from the impoverished African countries of Chad, Niger, South Sudan and Sudan and would have been considered asylum seekers under international law. In addition to at least 37 fatalities, over 150 people were injured during charges and beatings by the security forces or after falling from the 6- to 10-metre-high fences preventing entry into the Spanish exclave from Morocco.

The massacre was clearly coordinated by both countries, as the Civil Guard allowed Moroccan security forces into Melilla to illegally drive refugees who made it across the border back to Morocco. In the manner of a fascistic demagogue, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, the leader of the Socialist Party, declared his full support for the actions of the border guards, stating that they beat back a "violent assault" and an "attack on the territorial integrity" of Spain.

The massacre could hardly have taken place at a more opportune time for the government in Madrid, which is led by the Socialist Party and includes the pseudo-left Podemos. At the NATO summit beginning today in the Spanish capital, the Spanish government will push for refugee border crossings to be designated as a "hybrid threat" alongside terrorism and food insecurity in the aggressive military alliance's new strategic concept, which Madrid hopes will legitimise the expansion of its military operations in Africa.

NATO's strategic roadmap for the next decade will include plans for how war will be fought by US and European imperialism against Russia and China. Leaving no doubt about this fact, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced Monday that NATO's rapid reaction force in the Baltic and Eastern Europe will increase eight-fold, from 40,000 to over 300,000 troops.

Such a vast escalation of military violence is incompatible with democratic rights. The bloody massacring of desperate migrants on the European Union's southern border must therefore be taken as a serious warning by working people everywhere. The unconditional defence of the fascistic border guards by the Spanish government demonstrates that as they wage war in the east, Europe's ruling elites are deploying the most brutal forms of repression against anyone who gets in the way of their reckless plans of imperialist conquest.

This was underscored by the deafening silence on the massacre at the G7 summit that concludes today in Schloss Elmau in Germany. While the leaders of the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan agreed on a sanctimonious statement pledging to "strengthen the resilience of our democracies" and a commitment to the "rules-based international order," not a word was wasted on the bloody massacre on Europe's doorstep.

Late yesterday evening, a semi-truck trailer filled with dozens of dead undocumented Central American immigrants was discovered in San Antonio, Texas. The truck was carrying refugees fleeing desperate economic conditions in Central America, the legacy of over a century of US imperialist exploitation. Their peaceful entry into the country was barred by the Biden administration's anti-immigrant restrictions. The official death toll of 46 is expected to rise and likely includes children.

The cold indifference shown by the ruling elites of all the major powers towards the lives of the most oppressed sections of society recalls the contemptuous attitude taken by the imperialist powers on the eve of World War II to the plight of Europe's Jews and other persecuted minorities fleeing the Nazi regime. At the infamous 1938 Evian Conference, none of the major powers agreed to accept additional refugees for fear of damaging relations with the Third Reich, which was at the time still viewed by substantial sections of the European ruling class as an ally against the Soviet Union.

It is not merely a matter of historical coincidence that Friday's massacre occurred in Spain's North African territory, from where a revolt by fascist officers in July 1936, led by Francisco Franco, served as the basis for the fascist movement that emerged victorious in the Spanish Civil War and ruthlessly oppressed the Spanish working class for four decades. The EU's official sanctioning of Friday's massacre will encourage and strengthen present-day fascist movements across the continent, which are

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cultivated by the ruling class to crush worker opposition to its unpopular policies.

The European Union and its member states have systematically created the conditions for fascistic violence against workers and the most oppressed layers of society through the promotion of far-right political forces and the militarisation of the entire continent. Far-right and fascistic parties play a prominent role in the official political life of all the major European powers, while their militaries and security forces are rife with far-right networks. In Germany, these groups have drawn up kill lists of political opponents to be executed on "Day X," while high-ranking military personnel in France and Spain openly discuss plans to seize power in coups.

The EU's "fortress Europe" policy has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of refugees who have drowned in the Mediterranean over the past three decades while trying to flee the social catastrophe produced by uninterrupted imperialist wars and the legacy of the colonial subjugation of Africa and the Middle East. Illegal "pushbacks," where Europe's fascistic Frontex border guards and their partners in the national security forces forcibly return migrants across the EU's external borders before they have had a chance to exercise their legal right to apply for asylum, are part of the EU's standard operating procedure.

European governments from across the official political spectrum have fully embraced the EU's far-right policies towards refugees. When large numbers of migrants fled the imperialist-instigated war in Syria in 2015, Greece's pseudo-left Syriza government established a series of concentration camp-style facilities on islands in the Aegean Sea to detain asylum seekers.

At the initiative of Italy's far-right Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, the EU suspended all naval rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea in 2019, leaving thousands of people to drown. Finland's Social Democrat-led government, which was hailed as a "progressive" breath of fresh air when it came to power in 2019, has followed up its application to join NATO by declaring its intention to begin constructing barriers along its 1,300-kilometre border with Russia to guard against the potential for refugees to be used as "hybrid warfare" by Moscow. Helsinki is following in the footsteps of Poland's right-wing PIS government, which illegally blocked refugees from crossing the border with Belarus last winter, leaving many to freeze to death in the forest.

The same governments who are engaged in abrogating the most basic democratic rights are in the front ranks of the imperialist war against Russia. Britain's Tory government, which intends to dispatch asylum seekers to poverty-stricken Rwanda, has led the European powers in providing heavy weaponry to the Ukrainian regime. In Germany, the Social Democrat-led government, which maintains vicious anti-refugee policies adopted from the fascist Alternative for Germany, has tripled the country's defence budget for this year as part of the largest rearmament programme since Hitler. French President Emmanuel Macron, whose government has brutally attacked migrant camps in Calais and Paris and systematically discriminates against the substantial Muslim minority, recently declared that the population must get used to living in a "war economy." The Spanish government, which perpetrated Friday's massacre, has sent 800 troops, Eurofighter jets, and warships to Eastern Europe and plans to use the NATO summit to announce a doubling of Spain's military budget to €24 billion.

Together with their US ally, which specialises in detaining child refugees in prison-like conditions and laying waste to entire societies in over 30 years of uninterrupted war, these are the governments that the media propagandists claim are waging a war for "democracy" and the "freedom" of Ukraine against "Russian aggression" and the "fascist" Putin.

There is in fact nothing "democratic" about the imperialist redivision of the world that is now well under way. The hundreds of billions of euros that the leading European imperialist powers plan to spend on their war machines in order to subjugate Russia, seize control of its lucrative natural resources, and fend off competition from their imperialist rivals will have to be squeezed out of the working class through stepped up austerity and attacks on wages and working conditions.

Tobias Elwood, a leading member of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party, denounced 50,000 rail workers on strike last week for job security and wage increases, with inflation at over 11 percent, as "Putin's friends." Spain's Socialist Party/Podemos government banned a strike by Ryanair pilots and cabin crews over the weekend. In Germany, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier declared in the weeks following the presentation of the massive €100 billion rearmament programme that the population would have to make "sacrifices" to pay for the war.

The defence of all democratic and social rights, including the right of working people to live in whichever country they please, is inseparable from the struggle of the international working class against imperialist war. In opposition to the threat of savage repression at home and the waging of war abroad, the *World Socialist Web Site* calls for the building of an international anti-war movement in the working class to uphold democratic rights through the fight for socialism.

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