

Podemos bemoans crackdown in Peru, but arms Peru's regime against the workers

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The bloody police-state repression unleashed on the Peruvian workers and youth by the regime of Dina Boluarte, which was installed in a US- and EU-backed coup, is again exposing Spain's ruling pseudo-left party, Podemos.

Protests have continued for seven weeks since the installation of the Boluarte regime, which has responded with a bloody crackdown. Mass arrests are underway. More than 60 people have been killed, including minors, and nearly 1,000 injured as the Peruvian regime unleashes police armed with tear gas, rubber bullets, and armored vehicles on protesters.

Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos coalition government is firmly on the side of the coup against the Peruvian workers.

Last week, Podemos lawmaker and first secretary of parliament, Gerardo Pisarello, publicly insisted his government was shocked and dismayed by the violence in Peru. He declared: "I cannot begin my speech on foreign policy without first expressing our deep concern about the repressive violence that has been unleashed against the civilian population in Peru in recent weeks." He called on "the Government of Dina Boluarte to end the repression and persecution of community leaders, and ensure Peruvians' legitimate right to protest."

This was a cynical and lying exercise in political damage control, after Amnesty International issued a [report](#) showing that the Peruvian regime was using riot control equipment sold to it by the PSOE and Podemos to crack down on Peruvian workers and youth.

Amnesty International estimates that between 2017 and June 2022, the PSOE-Podemos government exported millions of euros worth in arms to Peru, including €4.7 million in light arms, €2.4 million worth of ammunition and close to €1 million in riot control weapons. Over the same period, it issued licences authorising the export of €184 million in arms to Peru, of which about €40 million

were riot control material.

This was when the PSOE and Podemos were in power, first in a PSOE-led minority government backed by Podemos from 2018 to January 2020, and in a coalition government since then. The WWSW [reported](#) in 2021 that the PSOE Podemos-government is a "leading exporter in police and riot gear as the global financial aristocracy faces mass social opposition to its policies of austerity, militarism and malign neglect in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic." These weapons are now being used against workers in Peru.

Amnesty International has requested the suspension of these exports in a letter addressed to the Spanish Secretary of State for Commerce, Xiana Margarida Méndez. It requests that—in accordance with the Arms Trade Treaty, which obliges not to authorise exports when there is a substantial risk of serious human rights violations—the PSOE-Podemos government should revoke authorisation of exports of lethal and anti-riot material. This letter has been ignored.

The export of riot control material under Podemos was not an oversight or a passing error of this pseudo-left party. Indeed, Podemos placed calls for the mass export of lethal weaponry to military dictatorships and right-wing regimes at the centre of its economic policies.

In October 2020, Podemos' Defence spokesman Roberto Uriarte spoke at the Information Defence Forum in parliament to [call](#) for export diversification and more research in the arms industry. The industry should not "put all their eggs in one basket," he said. Instead, he added, "The defence industry must base its growth on the diversification of its solutions and on the search for new markets abroad, so that the Ministry of Defence is not the only client of the weapons industry."

Uriarte called on Spain to export arms to regimes around the world. "We should not only sell [arms] in a monoculture fashion to the monarchies of the Persian

Gulf,” he said. Spain, he insisted, must “implement public policies and facilitate the internationalisation” of weapons sales. He called for investment in research and development, which requires “long-term policies, little demagoguery and a lot of sacrifice and dedication.”

Podemos acted on its call for a massive expansion of Spanish arms exports. Under Podemos, Spain climbed from the 11th-largest arms exporter worldwide in 2016 to the seventh in 2020—a position it still has today. It only lags behind the major imperialist countries like the US, Britain, Germany and France and world powers such as Russia and China. Spain’s military-industrial complex is a pillar of its economy, employing 21,000 people and generating an annual turnover of €6.2 billion.

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic killed hundreds of thousands across Spain and Europe, the PSOE-Podemos government authorised weapons sales worth a record €22.5 billion.

Amid NATO’s rapidly-escalating war with Russia in Ukraine, Podemos is working to ramp up its arms sales. Spain’s arms industry is set for record profits after the PSOE-Podemos government passed its 2023 budget, with the largest increase in military spending in Spanish history. This spending will total over €12.8 billion next year, up from around €10 billion in 2022. This is in line with Madrid’s pledge to NATO to increase its defence budget to 2 percent of GDP by 2029.

According to data from the Delàs Center for Peace Studies, Madrid’s real military spending—which includes, besides the Ministry of Defence budget, other items of a military nature purchased by the Spanish government—will be €27 billion, or €75.7 million per day. A large portion of this spending, €4.9 billion, is allocated to “special modernisation programmes,” which mostly go to Spanish arms companies.

The Barcelona-based daily *La Vanguardia* recently published an article titled “Historic boost to the defence industry” hailing the military escalation launched by Podemos. Arms manufacturers like Airbus, Navantia, GDELS-Santa Bárbara and Indra are those, it wrote, that the PSOE-Podemos government “wants to convert into the spearhead of a long-term country operation to strengthen the sector. For them there will be a shower of millions.”

It hailed the surge in state handouts to the arms manufacturers launched by Podemos, adding: “The opportunity is unprecedented. Never before has the Spanish defence, security, aeronautics and space industry faced the challenge of growing and modernising with

such a powerful contribution of state money.”

Podemos’ eagerness to export arms for state repression internationally was clearly bound up with its now well-established record of using such weapons against strikers in Spain itself.

In November 2021, the PSOE-Podemos government sent police to fire pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets at striking Cádiz metalworkers, even deploying armoured cars in working class areas to terrorize the public. It launched the unprecedented deployment of 23,000 cops to break the April 2022 truckers’ strike, and of 20,000 police officers armed with 6,000 taser cartridges to crack down on protests against last June’s NATO summit.

Abroad, by backing Boluarte in Lima, Podemos aims to safeguard continued extraction of Peru’s strategic mineral wealth—especially copper, zinc and liquefied natural gas—and the corporate interests of Spanish banks BBVA and Banco Santander, and multinationals like Telefónica and Zara.

Fundamental political lessons must be drawn from the anti-worker militarism of parties like Podemos that the ruling elites falsely promote as the “left.” The evolution of Podemos, since its foundation in 2014, is not the result of a tactical error or mistakes of its party leadership. Speaking for affluent, pro-imperialist layers of the middle class, Podemos pledged to build a broad left movement and effect democratic change through the Spanish capitalist state machine.

This entailed using this machine to defend Spanish capitalism’s financial and strategic interests against the working class. Police violence abroad and at home are the inevitable outcome of such bankrupt politics.

Podemos’ support for police repression in Peru shows that building an international, revolutionary struggle against austerity, war and dictatorship depends on mobilising the working class against all the reactionary capitalist parties, especially “left populist” variants like Podemos. This is the critical lesson which must be drawn.



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