

PSOE-Podemos enforcement of EU “Let them drown” policy kills another 37 migrants in Spain

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The European Union’s brutal Fortress Europe policy enforced by the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government against migrants and refugees attempting to reach Europe through the Atlantic route has claimed another 37 migrants, including at least a baby, several children and two teenagers.??

They were part of a group of 61 people who were sailing in a rubber boat on their way to the Canary Islands. Only 24 have survived. Forcefully returned by Morocco to Cape Bojador, on the Saharawi coast, four have been hospitalized.?

On the afternoon of June 20, family members of the migrants who were heading towards the Canary Islands raised the alarm that their boat was in distress. They contacted the NGO Caminando Sin Fronteras (Walking Without Borders), which immediately requested their rescue from the Spanish emergency services.

Though the maritime area falls under Spanish jurisdictional waters and a boat from Maritime Rescue was only an hour away, Spain delegated the rescue operation to Morocco. As a result, the boat drifted for about 12 hours until it sank. When a Moroccan boat arrived, it could only rescue survivors.

The only action taken by the Spanish rescue services was to contact a nearby container ship and ask them to monitor the boat. However, the container ship was too large to perform a rescue operation. Merchant ship captains are prohibited from carrying out such operations.

Helena Maleno, spokesperson for Caminando Sin Fronteras, explained, “They redirected a cargo ship that had been blocking the rubber dinghy for hours, just to protect themselves and avoid taking responsibility in case the migrants drowned. People were in a state of

panic, exhausted, on an empty rubber dinghy. It’s the same as in Greece, Italy and Spain, and it reflects the European politics at the borders. It’s torture and death.”

She said, “Spain has become Greece, and this is repeated every day at the European borders.”

Caminando Fronteras already pointed out in its 2022 report published in January that “The omission of the duty of relief has become a key tool in migration control on the Euro-African Western Border.” This terrible conclusion shows that the refusal of the Spanish and Greek governments to rescue boats in danger with migrants is not an isolated event or a mistake but a deliberate policy of letting migrants drown in accordance with the “Fortress Europe” doctrine.

The EU’s brutal anti-migrant policy has left tens of thousands dead. In the Mediterranean, it claimed at least 1,200 lives in 2022, adding to the horrifying tally of almost 25,000 deaths since 2014. In the Atlantic, where desperate migrants must travel hundreds of kilometers for days, if not weeks, on makeshift boats, this route left at least 1,784 migrants dead only in 2022, according to Caminando Sin Fronteras. In total, 2,390 people have died trying to reach Spain.

This latest crime resembles the one off the coast of Greece when the Greek Coast Guard capsized the fishing boat *Adriana* with some 750 refugees aboard, of which only 104 were found alive. It is one of the worst crimes in the Mediterranean’s history.

According to witnesses, the Greek Coast Guard threw a rope to the refugee boat and initially tried to tow it away. When this apparently did not succeed, the Coast Guard boat first made a sharp turn to the right and then to the left, causing the boat to capsize. The Coast Guard

thus deliberately risked the deaths of hundreds of refugees, if not intentionally caused them.

Over the last four years in Spain, repression and violence against migrants has been spearheaded by the PSOE-Podemos government. It is no different from policies advocated by the Spanish neo-fascists of the Vox party or other European far-right parties.

In fact, last April Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez traveled to Rome to meet with neo-fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The two agreed to escalate anti-migrant policies, with Sánchez declaring: “Many countries have recognized that illegal immigration is a European problem that requires a European response of a political nature.”

Sánchez stressed the importance of the Migration and Asylum Pact, which was approved earlier this month. Under its terms, EU interior ministers have effectively abandoned the right of asylum for refugees. Refugees are now to be interned in detention camps at the EU’s external borders in the future, their asylum applications to be decided in a fast-track procedure and then deported to almost any third country.

The PSOE-Podemos government has passed a threshold that would previously have been unthinkable except under far-right regimes. It was only after the “Left Populist” Podemos party took office that the Spanish government sent the army against refugees in Ceuta and interned migrants in concentration camps in the Canary Islands.

The latest implementation of the brutal “let them drown” policy takes place a year after the PSOE-Podemos government in collaboration with Rabat committed a massacre against refugees in Melilla leaving 37 dead.

The Moroccan Gendarmerie, working with the Spanish police and Civil Guard, attacked 2,000 desperate refugees who tried to climb over the fence separating Morocco from Spain’s African enclave, Melilla. Tear gas, rubber bullets, falls from the fences and stampedes resulted in at least 37 deaths, according to the UN, and 77 deaths, according to the Moroccan Association for Human Rights.

Spanish security forces allowed the Moroccan gendarmes to act on Spanish territory, where several of the deaths occurred. They also collaborated in preventing the migrants from receiving medical assistance.

Podemos remained silent on the massacre. Two days after the killings at a press conference, Podemos Minister for Equality Irene Montero refused to take a position on the massacre, despite being asked by journalists five times. It later emerged that her silence had been agreed upon between the PSOE and Podemos.

Podemos then refused a parliamentary inquiry into the massacre, joining the PSOE, the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and Vox. Subsequently, the PSOE-Podemos government lobbied NATO to classify migration as a “hybrid threat,” comparable to terrorism and food insecurity.

This was yet another demonstration of the pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics of the PSOE-Podemos government, which delivered millions of euros in weapons to the Ukraine and deployed troops on the borders with Russia to promote the war that NATO is waging out against Moscow.

The fact that Podemos, which is now part of the electoral platform Sumar for the July 23 general elections, has enforced the EU’s murderous policy to the last days of its interim government testifies to the reactionary character of the PSOE-Podemos coalition. It is also carrying out police crackdowns on metalworkers in northwestern Spain and imposing draconian minimum service requirements to try to block mass strikes taking place across Spain.

It demonstrates a key axiom of Marxism. The illegal violence turned against refugees today serves inevitably to suppress the resistance and opposition of the working class and youth to austerity and war. Defending the refugees is the task of the working class. It is the only social force that can counter capitalist reaction and defend democratic rights.



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