Tens of thousands march across Spain in solidarity with Palestinians

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Tens of thousands of people across Spain have taken to the streets to protest the genocidal war Israel is waging on the Palestinians of Gaza, which has already killed nearly 3,000 civilians and left 2.3 million people, half of whom are under 18, without water, fuel or electricity.

Demonstrations have taken place in Barcelona, Pamplona, Murcia, Bilbao, Santiago de Compostela, Coruña, Vigo, Ourense , Zaragoza, Bilbao, Alicante, Vitoria, San Sebastián, València, Seville, Valladolid and Granada.

The apex was the demonstration in Madrid that brought together 60,000 people on Sunday. Called by different solidarity associations with Palestine, the protest in Madrid occupied the entire center of the capital and exceeded the expectations of even its organisers. They had to delay the start of the protest given the amount of people that were accumulating en route.

There was mass participation of Arabs and Palestinians living in Spain, as well as thousands of Spanish workers and, above all, large numbers of youth. Chants could be heard like “Israel murders, Europe sponsors,” “Netanyahu murderer of the Palestinian people,” “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” and “It’s not a war, it’s a genocide.”

These protests are part of mass working class protests internationally against the genocidal policies of the Israeli state, which has the full backing of Washington and its European allies, including Spain. The mass street protests contrast sharply with the media, which has almost unanimously supported Israel and denounced the Palestinian uprising as criminal.

The Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government’s prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, has backed Israel. He said, “We strongly and unambiguously condemn the Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and also the deaths of Israelis,” demanding the “urgent” release of all “hostages and Israeli captives.” Justifying Israel’s genocidal actions, Sánchez added, “With the same force, we say that Israel has the right to defend itself, but always within international humanitarian law.”

Sumar and Podemos made pro forma criticisms to hide the fact that their own government has provided millions in arms to the Israeli government which are now being used against the Palestinian population.

Ione Belarra, acting minister of social rights and leader of Podemos, attended the protest in Madrid on Sunday. She tweeted: “Their government [in Israel] is carrying out war crimes in Gaza, with mass bombings, water and electricity shutoffs; they are not allowing humanitarian aid. Denouncing this genocide does not mean supporting Hamas, it is a democratic obligation. Silence is complicity with terror.” Belarra also proposed that the Spanish government submit a petition to the International Court of Justice on Israeli war crimes.

Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz, of the Sumar electoral coalition that includes Podemos, tweeted last week, “The international community cannot look the other way. The EU must demand that Israel halt the plans that are causing a massacre.” She called on Spain and the EU “to urgently mobilize for peace.”

Belarra and Díaz know perfectly well that the European Union, which has evolved into a military alliance, dominated by Germany and France, waging war with Russia in Ukraine, is a historic defender of Israel’s Zionist regime and bitterly hostile to the rights of the Palestinian people. France and Germany have

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banned pro-Palestinian demonstrations. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen immediately sided with Netanyahu, declaring in a press conference with him that “Israel has the right and duty to defend itself.”

These useless appeals throw dust in the eyes of workers and youth to hide the fact that the PSOE-Podemos government is politically implicated in the crimes against humanity in Gaza.

The two countries recently celebrated the “Fifth Spain-Israel Strategic Dialogue” gathering senior officials from both countries, including from their defense ministries and armies. Both governments reiterated their commitment to NATO’s imperialist war on Russia. The conference discussed how “Israel should consider how to expand its cooperation with the EU countries in the Ukraine conflict … There is a plenty of scope for Israel to help meet the growing demand from Spain and its EU partners for civil and military technology.”

Between 2020 and 2022, Israel imported 140 million euros in weaponry from Spain. According to the Delàs Center for Peace Studies, arms exports to Israel from both EU countries violate EU criteria that “define the rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment,” such as “respect for the international commitments and obligations of the Member States;” or “respect for human rights in the country of final destination.”

The report indicated that “Spain buys weapons from Israel for a value much higher than what it sells.” Just on anti-tank missiles produced by the Israeli company Rafael, the Spanish Ministry of Defense spent 364 million euros. Israel sells its weapons with the “combat-tested” mark, meaning that their use against the Palestinians gives them added value for armies like the Spanish one.

Furthermore, the Delás report points out that arms exports allow Israel to lower its production costs, as the price per unit manufactured is cheaper if large quantities of weapons are produced. This turns buyers of Israeli arms like the PSOE-Podemos government into collaborators in the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

In addition, the Ministry of Defense uses spying and communications interception services provided by Israeli companies. Among the clients, the Ministry of Defense, the CNI, the National Police Corps, the Civil Guard and various regional police forces stand out. This includes the infamous Pegasus spying software, used to spy on Catalan nationalist politicians.

Podemos and Sumar have joined in the entire Spanish political establishment’s policy of imperialist war abroad and war on the working class at home. Both played a leading role in the NATO war against Russia in the Ukraine, sending hundreds of millions in military aid to Ukraine. This includes rocket launchers, armoured vehicles and tanks and the training of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers on Spanish soil. Spanish weapons provided by Podemos and Sumar ended up in the hands of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion.

At home, this government has implemented ruthless austerity for four years, including reactionary labour and pension reforms, the murder of migrants on its borders, and has launched violent crackdowns on strikes.

The mass protests in Spain against the Gaza war are part of a developing international movement against imperialism and war that has mobilized masses of workers and youth in the United States, European countries, and across the Middle East. The critical question is unifying the struggles of workers and youth in Spain against imperialism and war with those of their class brothers and sisters internationally. Ending this bloody conflict requires the intervention of the world working class and the unity of Israeli and Palestinian workers through an uncompromising struggle for socialism.

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