

100,000 march in Madrid in defense of Gaza

Santiago Guillen
30 October 2023

A wave of outrage against Israel's genocidal attack on Palestine is spreading across the world, bringing millions onto the streets. Cities such as London, Paris, Berlin, Istanbul, Stockholm, Baghdad, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur all saw mass demonstrations in the weekend of October 28–29, as did cities across Spain. Each weekend, the number of youth and workers protesting surpasses the number who joined the previous weekend.

If the first demonstrations two weeks ago were called almost exclusively by Palestinian organizations, hundreds of organizations of various political colorations are now calling on the population to join marches against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. On Saturday, October 28, there were mass marches in cities including Santiago de Compostela, Bilbao and Barcelona.

Santiago de Compostela, headquarters of the regional government of Galicia, saw a historic day as tens of thousands traveled to Santiago on chartered buses from other Galician cities such as Vigo or Coruña. They who demonstrated under the slogan "Galicia with Palestine." It had been many years since a demonstration of this scope had been seen in Santiago and, despite a strong storm of rain and wind that hit the city that day.

Tens of thousands of people marched in Bilbao under the slogan "Long live the Palestinian Resistance to genocidal Zionism." A statement read at the end of the march declared that "Israeli apartheid is sustained thanks to the complicity and collaboration of Western governments, companies and political parties ... Speeches that in the name of Peace call for the cessation of violence on both sides equate oppressed and oppressors. But the self-defense resistance of a people is not comparable to that of an imperialist colonial military entity."

On Sunday, there were mass demonstrations in cities

including Granada, Valencia and Burgos, and above all in Madrid, where 100,000 people marched in the largest protest in Spain since the beginning of the Israeli aggression. Chanting "It was a hospital, not a military base" or "It's not a war, it's genocide," protesters denounced the violence against Gaza. Protesters spoke to WSWs reporters in Madrid.

Javier Lobo, a recently retired public official, said: "I come to support the Palestinian people and their historical claim to a territory that was theirs, from which they were expelled with the connivance of the UN. Since 1948 there has been abuse by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people. It is a war crime not only now, because of the bombings, but throughout all these years and even more so now with this Netanyahu Nazi government."

Lobo insisted that criticisms of Hamas should be made from a left-wing standpoint, adding: "We must not forget that Hamas coexisted with the Israeli authorities and Israel allowed the Hamas force in Gaza in order to divide the Palestinian people."

Carlos, a high school teacher, told the WSWs: "I think this is a just cause. It is the most entrenched and unjust conflict in decades, and I have the impression that until this conflict is resolved some things in humanity cannot change."

He added, "Although it seems that might makes right, and that the Palestinian people have no possibility of escaping this repression and genocide, I believe that Israel's position is unsustainable. That is why they are becoming more and more hysterical, and I believe that this has no future. The global response is very strong, and there is a great current of empathy towards the Palestinians that prevents the official narrative from taking hold."

Antonio, a postman, attacked the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government: "We are all seeing how Israel is committing one of the greatest crimes,

they are destroying citizens who are not guilty of anything. The Spanish government, a government that boasts of being the most progressive in history, has sided with Israel, which still stands with the powerful against the weakest. We come here instead to defend the weakest, which, in this case, are the impoverished people of Palestine and Gaza.”

José, a computer scientist affiliated with the General Union of Labor (UGT) union, noted that the unions “have not done anything. I did not expect them to call a strike or something like that, because they do not do it to defend the workers in Spain. However, at least they should use their resources to help organize these demonstrations materially: sometimes there is not even a stage on which to give the final speech because there is no money, and money is something that they do have.”

Asked what he thought about the decision of UGT General Secretary Pepe Álvarez to join a demonstration in favor of Israel, he told the WSWs: “I was unaware of it. It is outrageous that they not only betray the workers, but also democratic rights.”

A class gulf separates the opposition to genocide and Zionist-imperialist war in the Middle East in the working class from the utterly insincere declarations of Podemos and the Spanish union bureaucracies, who cynically sent bureaucrats to join the marches this weekend. These forces are trying not to develop a struggle of the European and international working class against war and genocide, but to prevent it.

During the Madrid demonstration, the leader of the pseudo-left Podemos party, Ione Belarra, complained that the social-democratic head of the PSOE-Podemos government, Pedro Sánchez, is not “up to the task” posed by the war in Gaza. Her statements dripped with hypocrisy.

Belarra tried to take her listeners for fools and make them forget that her Podemos party is the one that has maintained Sánchez as prime minister for the last four years. Podemos has been Sánchez’s accomplice in all his reactionary policies, including collaboration with the state of Israel. Now the Sumar electoral coalition, within which Podemos is a member, has signed an agreement with Sánchez to keep this coalition government in power for four more years.

Every time a mass strike movement developed in the working class, the PSOE-Podemos government has

been rabidly hostile to it. It sent heavy detachments of riot police to assault steel workers demanding protections against COVID-19, a nationwide truckers strike and the Cadiz metal workers strike. They are determined opponents of a movement in the working class to defend Gaza against the genocidal onslaught it now faces.



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