

Spain's pseudo-left parties divert anger over Gaza genocide behind PSOE-Sumar government

Alejandro López
5 December 2023

For nearly two months, millions of people have protested internationally demanding an end to the genocide in Gaza unleashed by Israel with the full support of the United States and the European powers. The emergence of a global movement marks a historic stage in the class struggle. It objectively pits masses of workers and youth against all the capitalist governments supporting Israel, including the recently elected Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

In Spain, tens of thousands of protestors have taken to the streets of Madrid, Barcelona and other cities to oppose the genocide. In response to mounting anger, the PSOE-Sumar government, continuing from its predecessor, the PSOE-Podemos government, has mounted a cynical operation. Posturing as critic of Israel's crimes, it has continued to reassure Israel of its partnership. It is yet another devastating exposure of the imperialist militarism of the pseudo-left Podemos party, now part of the Sumar coalition.

In October, soon after the Israeli government allowed Hamas to launch its October 7 attack to create a pretext for a long-planned genocide against the people of Gaza, Podemos accused Israel of committing crimes against humanity. But the aim was to hide the fact that its own government had provided millions in arms to the Israeli government now being used against the Palestinian population.

Under the PSOE-Podemos government, trade relations soared to a record €3.1 billion. In 2022 alone, 2,558 companies exported to Israel, with the value of their goods and services reaching the record figure of €2.1 billion, an increase of 20.2 percent compared to the previous year. Some of Spain's largest corporations are present in Israel, such as Sacyr, Indra, Acs and Comsa. Imports from Israel reached €1 billion.

Weapons trade between Madrid and Tel Aviv also flourished. Between 2020 and 2022, Israel imported €140 million in weaponry, while Spain spent hundreds of millions buying weapons with the "combat-tested" mark from Israel. Their proven use against the Palestinians makes them more valuable and more reliable for Spain's armed forces.

In June, the two countries celebrated the "Fifth Spain-Israel Strategic Dialogue" chaired by retired Major General Amos Yadlin, the former Head of Israel's Military Intelligence. Participants included senior officials from the Spanish and Israeli ministries of foreign affairs and defense, the Israel Defense Forces and the PSOE-Podemos's Prime Minister's Office.

The dialogue concluded with keynote speeches by Chairman of the New Hope party and Chair of the Knesset Israel-Spain Parliamentary Friendship Group, Gideon Sa'ar, who has since joined the far-right Netanyahu emergency government formed to implement the ethnic cleansing in Gaza. Soon after, Spain bought 1,680 Spike LR2 anti-tank missiles worth €287 million from Israel.

After the Palestinian uprising of October 7, as Podemos was nominally

opposing the conflict, its own government sent Spanish frigate *Méndez Núñez* and military supply ship *Patiño* to join the battle group of the *USS Gerald R. Ford* aircraft carrier. The carrier is currently deployed in the eastern Mediterranean to provide US support for the Israeli war in Gaza, backing up US threats to bomb forces in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq or Iran that might seek to intervene militarily to assist the Palestinians.

As mass protests continued in Spain and across Europe, the first signs of the intervention of the working class internationally against the genocide terrified the PSOE-Podemos government. In Belgium, airport unions called on workers not to handle arms shipments to Israel. In Barcelona, 1,200 dockworkers announced they would refuse to service any ships carrying material to supply the Netanyahu government's war. In Ferrol, workers of public shipyard company Navantia denounced the dispatching of Spanish warships and demanded their immediate return and an end to all commercial and diplomatic ties with Israel. ?

Sánchez reacted by travelling to Israel and Egypt, where he said, "The indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians, including thousands of boys and girls, is completely unacceptable". At the same time, he upheld Israel's "right to defend itself", the universal mantra used to support the Gaza genocide.

Israel has since recalled its ambassador from Madrid for consultations over what Foreign Minister Eli Cohen called "heinous" statements by Sánchez, after the latter said he doubted Israel respected international law and repeated that military action in the Gaza Strip was not acceptable.

Last Friday, amid an escalating diplomatic row between Spain and Israel and as bombs rained on Gaza once again after the "humanitarian pause", Sánchez spoke by phone to former opposition leader and now Israeli Cabinet minister Benny Gantz. He reassured Gantz that he backed Israel, stating afterwards, "Once again, I condemned the Hamas terrorist attacks on Oct. 7," before adding, "I reaffirmed that Spain considers the number of civilian deaths in Gaza 'unbearable'".

Gantz said he updated Sánchez on the war, emphasizing that "terrorist Hamas must be dismantled in Gaza."

The pseudo-left intervenes to divert anger

Under these conditions, pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class are shielding Podemos and Sumar by blocking a movement in the working class against Spain's capitalist government.

The Morenoite Corriente Revolucionaria de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (Workers' Revolutionary Current, CRT)—the Spanish affiliate of Argentina's Socialist Workers Party (PTS) and *Révolution*

Permanente in France—and the Revolutionary Left (IR) group—the former Spanish affiliate of the Committee for a Workers’ International—make certain criticisms of Sumar/Podemos. But everything they write is dictated by one objective: to prevent workers from drawing the conclusion that Podemos and Sumar are reactionary parties and participants in a government that is backing the genocidal Israeli regime and which must be brought down.

They all claim that pressure “from below” can make the PSOE-Sumar government turn 180-degrees to oppose its own backing of Israel’s genocide and lead a movement against its own pro-war policy! The main vehicle through which to pressure the government, they claim, is the trade union bureaucracy, tied to the capitalist system and the PSOE-Sumar government by a thousand threads.

In “Pedro Sánchez meets with Netanyahu and whitewashes the Zionist genocide”, IR’s Executive Committee member Víctor Taibo, bemoans the “shameful” meeting between Sánchez and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He complains that “instead of cutting all types of diplomatic, economic and military relations with the State of Israel, which is what the left and the social movements in the streets are demanding, the opposite is done.”

Taibo’s advises Sumar and Podemos to hype up their rhetoric, concerned that they are rapidly discrediting themselves in the eyes of workers and youth. “That Sumar, [Stalinist Left United Left] IU, PCE or Más País, with Podemos already out of the Government, maintain a complicit silence in the face of this visit is *absolutely regrettable and unjustifiable*. The fact that one of the new ministers appointed by Izquierda Unida, Sira Rego, is Palestinian has not changed the situation one bit. It is not enough to show a pin or make a tweet, we must denounce and break with this hypocritical and despicable policy.” [emphasis added]

In an article headlined “Imperialist hypocrisy: the Spanish government spends millions of euros in Israeli missiles”, CRT member Irene Olano states, “Pedro Sánchez’s attitude is thus revealed as one more imposture that will not put a single stone in the line of stopping the genocide. It is necessary to break economic, diplomatic and military relations with the genocidal State of Israel, as well as demand the immediate withdrawal of troops in Lebanon, where the Ministry of Defense maintains a detachment to help Israel with the conflict with Hezbollah.”

Olona, like Taibo, then promotes the political fiction of the trade unions mobilising against the PSOE-Sumar government to reverse its support for Israel. She states, “It is necessary to promote massive mobilization and for all unions, left-wing organizations and social movements to stand up to demand an end to the genocide and to denounce the complicity of the Spanish government with it. *The Spanish government must break all pacts and position itself in favor of the right to self-determination of Palestine* [emphasis added]”.

The record of PSOE and its allies Sumar and Podemos is irrefutable. They are not making “regrettable and unjustifiable” mistakes, but leading a NATO government that has expended vast resources on waging war against Russia in Eastern Europe, ordered warships to join the US-led battle group in the eastern Mediterranean and is massively hiking the military budget alongside organising bailouts for major banks and corporations. By sitting inside a government that is abetting Israel’s genocide in Gaza, first Podemos and now Sumar have made themselves complicit.

As for the CRT and IR’s attempt to endow Spain’s union bureaucracy with any intention of opposing the PSOE-Sumar government’s support for Israel, the opposite is the case. They are openly supporting the Israeli war on Gaza.

The General Union of Workers (UGT) leader Pepe Álvarez has joined rallies to support Israel in front of the Israeli embassy called by pro-Zionist groups and met the Israeli ambassador to denounce the “ Hamas attacks” of October 7. Affiliated to the ruling PSOE, the UGT has a long

relationship with the main Israeli corporatist trade union, the Histadrut (General Federation of Land Workers of Israel), which is a pillar of the Israeli apartheid regime, fully supporting military attacks on Gaza and neighbouring countries.

The largest trade union in Spain, Workers Commissions (CCOO), linked to Sumar, has made a few statements calling for an end to the war but has refused to call out its members in key Spanish war industries, airports and ports to stop the transfer of weapons to Israel.

This continues their role during the ongoing NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, in which both CCOO and UGT have backed Spanish imperialism and the capitalist PSOE-Podemos government, calling for workers to carry out five-minute work stoppages to support the far-right, pro-NATO regime in Ukraine. The PSOE-Podemos government, for its part, sent tanks, anti-aircraft batteries, artillery shells and other ammunition to Ukraine, including to the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion.

Support for imperialist war abroad is married to their treachery in the class war at home. The UGT and CCOO bureaucracies have acted as tools of the capitalist class, working with the government to impose below-inflation wages and systematically isolate and strangle strikes. They allowed the previous PSOE- Podemos government to send armored vehicles against striking metalworkers, outlaw strikes using draconian minimum services laws, and deploy tens of thousands of police against a three-week nationwide truckers’ strike.

CRT and IR’s backhanded promotion of Sumar and the union bureaucracy reflects its petty-bourgeois hostility to building a politically independent movement in the working class. The real fight against imperialism and its policies of genocide and war means the struggle for the political independence of the working class, not only from the capitalist parties like Sumar and Podemos, but their lackeys in the union bureaucracy.

A powerful anti-war movement in the working class, including direct actions to prevent the production and transport of weapons for Israel, is inextricably linked to a rebellion against the union apparatus and the transfer of power to the rank and file. Fighting to build such a movement also requires building a Marxist, internationalist, that is Trotskyist, party in the working class to oppose reactionary capitalist governments like the PSOE-Sumar coalition in Spain. This means building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Spain and internationally.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)