

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez stays in office after threatening to resign

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On Monday, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar coalition government announced that he would remain in office. Five days earlier, he had suddenly threatened to resign, after far-right forces made bogus allegations of corruption against Sánchez's wife, Begoña Gómez.

The crisis at the summit of the Spanish state reflects the enormous instability of the capitalist ruling elites internationally amid war, genocide in Gaza and mounting popular opposition. Sánchez's threat to resign came amid growing conflicts inside the Spanish political establishment, notably around the PSOE's failure to obtain a majority to vote a national budget. Some media speculated that Sánchez's resignation threat might be aimed at obtaining more support from Catalan nationalists in parliament who have not yet supported his budget.

Above all, however, it reflects the crisis caused by the mounting international opposition among youth and workers to the genocide in Gaza and NATO wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. Protests have broken out in the United States, where police are violently cracking down on student anti-genocide protests on university campuses across the country. Over a million people protested in Sanaa, Yemen, on Friday, while hundreds of thousands of people in Spain are still demonstrating against the Israeli war on Gaza.

What particularly terrifies Sánchez is mounting public outrage at his government's continuing arms trade with Israel. It is widely known and commented upon in Spanish media that these ties make the PSOE-Sumar government politically complicit in the genocide in Gaza. The PSOE and its pseudo-left satellites, like Sumar and Podemos, are terrified of explosive opposition on their left that could provoke a far broader movement in the Spanish and international working class.

On Wednesday, Sánchez posted a letter on X/Twitter stating he would halt all his public duties until Monday. He said the allegations were false, but said he would appear before the media to announce a decision on his political future. "Should I continue to lead this government or renounce this highest of honors?" Sánchez wrote in a four-page letter. "I urgently need to answer a question that I keep asking myself: Is it worth it for

me to remain [in office] in spite of the right and far-right's mudslinging?"

Sánchez's announcement came only hours after Spanish media reported that a judge had launched a probe into his wife, who had been singled out in a legal complaint filed by the far-right Manos Limpias (Clean Hands) organisation. Such is the flimsy nature of the charges that even Manos Limpias leader Miguel Bernad admitted that they could be fake, as he presented them. Bernad said: "If they are not true, those who published them will be the ones who must assume the falsehood."

Bernad is a former leader of Francoite Fuerza Nueva (New Force) party, and Manos Limpias is notorious for launching charges against PSOE or Podemos leaders, and fighting anti-fascist measures. In 2009, the judiciary accepted Manos Limpias' complaint against judge Baltasar Garzón for investigating the crimes of the fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Garzón was debarred from the judiciary for a decade. In 2021, Spain's National Court found Manos Limpias guilty of using the threat of lawsuits and smear campaigns to extort banks and companies.

Under these conditions, Sánchez's decision to withdraw from public life and consider resigning, instead of immediately fighting the charges, testifies to his own reactionary outlook and indifference to democratic principles. His resignation would, indeed, have led to an election that could bring to power an alliance between the right-wing Popular Party and the far-right Vox party. Sánchez's statement made clear that he was actively considering whether such forces could be installed in office.

By publicly mulling his own resignation, Sánchez was threatening to follow a path trodden by other social-democratic prime ministers, like Antonio Costa in Portugal and Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand. After they resigned, elections were held that handed power to right-wing parties so as to continue the agenda of war and austerity against the working class.

Costa was falsely accused of corruption last year, again on a manufactured case. After elections held earlier this year, Portugal is now led by a conservative government tied to the far-right Chega party.

Ardern resigned in January 2023 claiming she was "burnt

out.” New Zealand is now run by the right-wing National Party-led coalition government—which includes the far-right ACT Party and NZ First.

Thousands of supporters of Sánchez in the PSOE, but also Sumar, Podemos and allied pseudo-left parties, marched before PSOE headquarters in Madrid this weekend to support him against the right. At the same time, however, Sánchez’s government was escalating its militarism abroad. A week before his resignation, he signed an extra €1.1 billion in extraordinary military spending. The PSOE-Sumar government also said Madrid will supply the far-right Ukraine regime with Patriot missiles, howitzers, anti-tank weapons, heavy artillery ammunition and new Leopard tanks.

Amid these reactionary maneuvers of Sánchez and his pseudo-left allies, *El País* reported the indifference of layers of workers. “Life continued its course in one corner of working class Madrid while the president revealed his future,” it reported. But in an affluent neighborhood, it wrote, people “waited with a countdown on the television” in a bar.

In his perfunctory, 9-minute remarks on Monday, Sánchez thanked Sumar, Podemos and their periphery for supporting his government. He said that the weekend’s “social mobilization ... decisively influenced my reflection and for which I once again thank you.”

This statement thanking Sumar, Podemos and the union bureaucracies for their support has the most far-reaching, reactionary implications. By implication, had Sánchez not encountered support from his political allies, but rather a mobilization of broader opposition to his policies in the working class, he could have considered resigning and triggering elections to install a far-right government.

Sánchez’s speech, predictably, was full of lies and delusions. While hailing the sacrifices his wife and other women have made to help their spouses’ careers, he said: “Spain was a society that, through a generous agreement, knew how to overcome the terrible and deep wounds of the worst of its past.” This refers to the pact of “forgive and forget” agreement enshrined during the transition from Francoism to parliamentary rule, and that the fascist crimes had to be forgotten.

He then pathetically said that that Spain “managed to overcome in an exemplary manner all the democratic challenges it suffered, successfully overcoming a pandemic, and that despite the difficult geopolitical context that we suffer with wars in the Middle East and in Ukraine, we live a very good economic moment and breathe peace.” In reality, over 140,000 lives were lost in Spain and 2 million in Europe during the pandemic, while inflation is devastating workers’ living standards amid the NATO war with Russia in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza.

Sánchez followed this with calls for “social peace” that are a sign of fear, not strength. For four years, first the PSOE-Podemos government, and now the PSOE-Sumar government,

has imposed the dictates of the financial aristocracy in collaboration with the union bureaucracy. They disbursed EU bailout funds to corporations and banks, imposed a reactionary labor reform and below-inflation wage increases that hit millions of workers, and initiated a multibillion-euro military rearmament plan.

Sánchez concluded, “Let’s show the world how democracy is defended. Let us put an end to this mud[slinging] in the only possible way,” adding that he remains committed “to firmly leading as prime minister.”

In reality, this political charade has exposed the reactionary role not only of the Spanish right, but also of the PSOE and its pseudo-left allies. Sánchez, while debating whether to install a right-wing government, poses as the great defender of democracy around which the left has to rally. His role vindicates the warnings made by the WWSW after the reelection of Sánchez’s government last year:

But in or out of office, the PSOE and Sumar will continue to advance anti-working class, pro-business, pro-war policies that will ultimately benefit the far right, while cynically utilising demands for unity against the right as a political weapon against rising social and political discontent.

The growth of the far right has proceeded not because they have a mass social base, as was the case in the 1930s, but thanks to their active promotion by the ruling class and the absence of any genuine alternative. For years, governments of the nominal right and left have imposed savage austerity at home and a descent into militarism and war abroad.

Workers and youth must reject the political blackmail that Sánchez is the only alternative to right-wing forces, and mobilize in an international movement against war, genocide and capitalism.



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