

Spain's farm labourers, University of Valencia students protest Gaza genocide

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Last Sunday in Almeria, hundreds of farm labourers, one of the most exploited sections of the Spanish working class, protested against Israel's ongoing genocide against Gaza. The march started from the fields of Campohermoso and travelled eight kilometres to San Isidro.

They demanded "that the terrorist governments of Israel and the United States immediately cease the terrorist actions that they are carrying out against the Palestinian people and that are already caused more than 35,000 deaths, more than half of them children."

Almeria is often referred to as the "orchard of Europe." It produces around 3.5 million tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables a year, with over 80 percent of it destined for export to European markets and generating €3 billion of turnover.

These profits are extracted through the superexploitation of the working class. Between 40,000 and 50,000 people work in the collection campaigns; the vast majority, 98 percent according to the Workers Commissions (CCOO) union, are foreigners and migrants. Another 30,000 work in the processing industry, which selects, packages and distributes produce.

They face abusive landowners, slum-like housing, toxic pesticides, extremely low wages and slave-like working conditions in temperatures up to 50 degrees Celsius with nonexistent ventilation in the greenhouses.

Nonetheless, hundreds of workers marched on Sunday, for many their only off day, in opposition to the genocide. The Palestine Solidarity Assembly of Níjar denounced "the double standard of complicit and lukewarm governments like that of the EU" and defended "the recognition of the Palestinian People to self-determination and live in peace."

The actions of Almeria laborers in one of the nodal points of food production in Europe show the vast social power of the international working class, the social force

that can stop the war and genocide in Gaza.

There have been numerous demands for working class action to halt the genocide across Europe over the last six months. 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 ships carrying material to supply the Netanyahu government's war. In Ferrol, workers at 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. ?

The fact that the mass opposition has been isolated in a few actions demonstrates the bankruptcy of the union bureaucracy. The main union confederations in the US, Germany, Britain and France have organised no action whatsoever against the genocide. They straitjacket working class struggles for peace and equality.

In Spain, Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Workers (UGT) have joined political stunts on Palestine organized by the PSOE-Sumar government, as it arms the Zionist regime. Yesterday, in May Day protests in over 70 cities across Spain many CCOO and UGT bureaucrats paid lip service to popular sympathy for the Palestinians, calling for a ceasefire and an end to the genocide. However, they have no intention of mobilizing the working class in a movement of strikes and protests against the PSOE-Sumar government and its support for Israel.

To the disgust of UGT members, UGT leader Pepe Álvarez joined rallies in front of the Israeli embassy called by pro-Zionist groups and met the Israeli ambassador, to support Israel and denounce the "Hamas attacks" of October 7. Affiliated to Spain's ruling PSOE, the UGT has a long relationship with Israel's corporatist trade union, the Histadrut (General Federation of Land Workers of Israel), which is a pillar of Israel's apartheid regime and fully supports war on Gaza.

Spain's largest trade union, CCOO, linked to Podemos, Sumar, and the Stalinist Communist Party of Spain, made a few statements calling for an end to the war. However, it has refused to call its members out in key Spanish industries, airports and ports to stop arms shipments to Israel.

Those protesting over Gaza must fight to mobilise workers internationally against the war and the genocide, independently of the union bureaucracies and their political allies, which subordinate the working class to national capitalist governments, like the PSOE-Sumar regime, that arm the Israeli state. This is also the task facing growing layers of student youth who, amid a mass crackdown on US university protests against the genocide, are also mobilizing in support of Gaza.

On Monday, University of Valencia (UV) students launched Spain's first university encampment in solidarity with Palestine. They built the camp "in support of the Palestinian people and against Israel's genocide" in Gaza, according to one of the organisers, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) of Valencià and Estudiantes per Palestine (Students for Palestine).

In a press statement, the camp organisers state that it is the genocide "best documented audiovisually by its victims and its perpetrators, the most serious that we have experienced in our lives and the one that speaks the worst of NATO, due to its complicity with the Israeli apartheid regime."

One student of the camp, Esther Monge, told *Salto Diario* that "the initiative arises from the movement in the universities of the United States and then in the rest of the world. And we wanted to join in so that the rest of the students and society in general join the camps and protests."

The students are demanding that the PSOE-Sumar government, that has continued selling and buying weapons from Israel despite claiming the contrary, cease this trade.

They are also demanding the reintroduction of universal jurisdiction, abolished a decade ago by the right-wing Popular Party, which would allow Spain to try crimes against genocide perpetrators outside of its territory. This would include Israeli officials and their international accomplices.

Students are also calling for an end to the persecution and criminalization of solidarity with Palestine, amid the police-state crackdown on US students, which has led to thousands of arrests across over 60 universities, coordinated nationally by the Biden administration. The

crackdown aims to outlaw opposition to genocide and war.

Likewise, the students took a principled position calling for the repeal of the Immigration Law—which allows for the expulsion of undocumented migrants and refugees—and the Citizens Security Law, popularly known as the Gag Law.

The Gag Law attacks the right to assembly by establishing a complicated bureaucratic process for obtaining permission to hold a protest, with hefty fines for violations. These range from €600 (\$723) for failing to notify the police about demonstrations to €30,000 (\$36,147) for holding protests that lead to "serious disturbances" near parliament. Anyone videotaping police during demonstrations faces a fine of up to €30,000. The law gives police broad stop-and-search powers and allows for summary expulsions of undocumented migrants at the Spanish border enclaves in Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa.

The law was passed a decade ago by the PP amid mass anti-austerity protests. The PSOE-Podemos government (2020-2023) and now the PSOE-Sumar government maintained the law, despite promising to repeal it once in power. Both governments have repeatedly used this law against strikers and protesters.

The camp at one of the main public universities in Spain underscores the ongoing and deepening opposition of students and youth to the mass murder in Gaza, which is being aided and abetted by all the imperialist governments, including the PSOE-Sumar government. The WSWS calls on students and youth turn to the working class, to fight the genocide and the developing attacks on democratic rights. The aim must be to mobilize develop a unified movement of workers around the world, against mass murder, imperialist militarism and their source, the capitalist system.



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