

Valencia flood disaster exposes Spain's pseudo-left Podemos and Sumar parties

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The catastrophic impact and death toll from the floods in Valencia serve as an indictment of Spain's main pseudo-left parties, Podemos and its split-off, Sumar, which currently is in power at the national level alongside the Socialist Party (PSOE). Despite years in power at both the national and Valencian regional levels, these parties have done nothing to protect the population from climate change-induced floods.

The Valencia floods are an unprecedented social crime. The death toll across Spain has now reached 224, including 217 in the Valencian Community, with 16 people still missing. Over 75 municipalities have suffered significant damage, affecting more than 60,000 people. Paiporta, considered the “ground zero” of the tragedy, recorded 70 deaths among those trapped in basements and garages.

A report from the Valencia Chamber of Commerce indicates that more than 54,000 businesses and over 400,000 workers have been impacted, with at least 4,500 premises damaged, 1,800 of which are completely destroyed.

The responsibility of the Valencian regional government and its regional premier, Carlos Mazón, from the right-wing Popular Party, is self-evident. Despite repeated warnings from Spain's meteorological agency, AEMET, no measures were taken on the day of the storm until many people had already drowned. In the following days, the regional government failed to mobilise the necessary resources to support the victims and was even unable to coordinate the thousands of volunteers who traveled to Valencia on their own initiative.

For its part, the national PSOE-Sumar government refused to declare the highest state of emergency, both on the day of the storm and in the days that followed. This would have allowed it to take control of emergency services in the place of the regional government. This was despite seeing from the outset that Mazón's government

was incapable of addressing the floods and their consequences.

To avoid intervening, PSOE and Sumar offered the pathetic excuse that they did not want to infringe on the regional powers of the Valencian government. They chose to sacrifice the lives of hundreds of people rather than take measures that would have exposed the PP's reactionary policies in Valencia.

The filthiest aspect of this response was that of Labor Minister and Sumar leader Yolanda Díaz. Fully aware of the severity of the approaching storm, she and her government could have suspended all non-essential activities to prevent workers from risking their lives. But they refused to do so, endangering the lives of thousands of workers who were forced to go to work and then spend the night trapped in warehouses and shopping centres. Many lost their lives, caught in cars and trucks that were swept away by the floods.

The next day, Díaz mocked the workers by appealing to the “responsibility” of businesses to ensure that “no one works under risky conditions.”

In fact, the region's main employers had shown blatant disregard for their employees' lives, forcing most of them to keep working. In this, the trade unions CCOO, affiliated with Sumar and Podemos, and UGT, affiliated with the PSOE, played a reactionary role, refusing to close down workplaces. This situation was described by a worker at a shopping centre: “Those who kept us here working, without closing, were our supervisors. They didn't let us leave. This can't happen. They played with our lives.”

Díaz's solution for workers was to tell workers to decide for themselves whether to go to work. She said, “Don't be afraid at all,” as the law prohibits “anyone from working under risky conditions.”

But workers know refusing to go to work can lead to being fired or facing retaliation from their employers.

This fear is justified, especially when they see that Díaz took no action to help them, nor did the union bureaucrats mobilise works councils to force companies to shut down. And as for Díaz's claim that the law protects anyone from working under risky conditions, that is simply an insult to workers, after many workers died at work in the flood.

On November 2, in Paiporta, the epicentre of the floods, hundreds of enraged people attacked the entourage of Spanish President Pedro Sánchez, regional president Mazón, and King Felipe VI by throwing mud at them. After this, Díaz came out as the main defender of these authorities and Spain's capitalist state.

In a subsequent meeting with the King, Díaz pontificated that the events were of utmost seriousness in a democracy, "because there was direct violence against the highest authorities: the Head of State, the President of the Government, and the President of the Generalitat [the regional government of Valencia]." She also labeled statements by Mazón criticising the army's delayed response during the floods as an act of "disloyalty to the Army and the Government itself."

The statements by Díaz defending the Spanish army would, years ago, have been typical of right-wing or far-right forces. Today, they are made by a leader who hails from the Stalinist Communist Party, was a leader in Podemos, and now leads Sumar. These are not incidental remarks; they reveal the extent to which Podemos and Sumar are pillars of Spanish capitalism and deeply hostile to the working class.

That this catastrophe could happen had been known for many years. Félix Francés, director of the University Research Institute of Engineering and Environment, called the floods a "foreseen disaster" and stated: "It was something perfectly known, not only by experts but also by the Administration, both national and regional ... and quite likely by the top political leadership."

In that top political leadership, Podemos has been present for a decade, while Sumar was formed in 2020 from groups that split from Podemos. Over these years, both parties have reacted to the flood risk the same way as the other Spanish establishment parties—that is, by doing nothing.

In the Valencia region, no hydraulic works have been undertaken in over 15 years. In 2022, the Red Cross issued a detailed study on flood risks in the Valencian Community, based on the 2019 floods, and called on Spanish authorities to implement disaster response plans. Neither PSOE, nor Podemos, nor Sumar heeded that warning.

An emblematic case is that of the Poyo and Pozalet ravines, whose overflow on October 28 caused many of the fatalities. The hydraulic works necessary to prevent a catastrophe like this were approved in 2007 and have yet to be carried out. Their current cost would be around €378 million, but there was never a budget to execute them. Similar projects in other areas suffered a similar fate.

The money that PSOE, Podemos, and Sumar could have used to save lives was instead spent on bailing out banks and large corporations, or on drastically increasing military spending to €27 billion annually to arm Spain for imperialist wars in Europe and the Middle East.

PSOE and Podemos also ruled the Valencian region between 2015 and 2023 alongside the nationalist party Compromís. During those eight years, their only contribution to improving emergency services in Valencia was the creation of the Valencian Emergency Unit (UVE), an entity that never became operational and did not even have a budget.

The lack of seriousness of this initiative became evident when the Firefighters' Platform of the Valencian Community, representing all firefighters in the region, warned that the UVE would not only duplicate functions but could also disorganise emergency response efforts. Firefighters said its creation "only stemmed from the whim of the regional government to set up another fire brigade ... where they could do and undo at their discretion." Thus its foundation had nothing to do with improving emergency services.

Podemos and Sumar are fully implicated in the social crime that occurred in Valencia. For years, they have worked to suppress class struggle and collaborate with various governments to implement cuts against workers. They are responsible for the fact that the funds needed to prevent this tragedy were instead allocated to further enrich the banks, major corporations and the army. The mass deaths in Valencia are the direct result of these policies.



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