Oppose repression of IR and CRT university students protesting Spain's neo-fascist Vox party!

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Today, six members of the Student Union and Contracorriente—the student organisations of Revolutionary Left (IR) and the Revolutionary Workers' Current (CRT), respectively—are being summoned by police over a protest held over a year ago against the neo-fascist Vox party at Madrid's Complutense University. This move by the PSOE-Sumar government is a blatant act of intimidation and criminalisation of left-wing, anti-war, and anti-fascist opposition.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the WSWS condemn this summoning of IR and CRT members and the broader repression of students opposing fascism, genocide and militarism. The ICFI has well-documented political differences with both the Pabloite IR and the Morenoite CRT parties. However, the ICFI defends their members against political repression.

Students internationally are being targeted for political repression. In the United States, the Trump administration has escalated authoritarian measures, detaining and threatening to deport those exercising their First Amendment rights, like Mahmoud Khalil and Momodou Taal. It is invoking the 1798 Alien Enemies Act to deport immigrants without due process, and openly defying court rulings. In Turkey, President Erdo?an is consolidating his presidential dictatorship with the politically motivated arrest of Istanbul's opposition mayor Ekrem ?mamo?lu.

Across Europe, thousands have faced arrest and fines for protesting against the NATO-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. Students have been particularly affected, with university administrations and police, including counter-terrorism units, launching coordinated actions against student activists and protestors.

In the Madrid case, police have refused to explain the summonses, but both IR and CRT said they are connected to a 13 February 2024 protest against former Vox parliamentary spokesperson Espinosa de los Monteros, who was invited to speak at the university's Faculty of Political Science at the invitation of far-right student group *Libertad sin ira* (Freedom without anger). Espinosa de los Monteros has not held public office since 2022, but remains a prominent figure in Vox.

According to the CRT, "the police officers did not provide details about the reason for the summons and only referred to 'events that took place in February at the university.'" Similarly, IR said, "Although the officers vaguely referred to events that 'could not be disclosed' during the phone call, it is clear" that these are related to the protests against Vox.

Complutense University has long been a site of anti-fascist activity. During the Spanish Civil War, it became a frontline in the defence of Madrid, with many students and faculty siding with the Republican cause against Franco's 1936 coup. Under the ensuing dictatorship, it emerged as a centre of clandestine student opposition, defying repression and ideological fascist control. Today, it remains a centre of opposition, reflecting the deep-rooted opposition in the Spanish working class to authoritarianism and the far right.

Vox's appearance on campus was a deliberate provocation—part of its familiar tactic of staging events in working class, migrant neighbourhoods and in Catalan or Basque nationalist strongholds to incite backlash and then play the victim of so-called leftist intolerance.

The protest—communicated in advance to the university administration—began as hundreds of students, mobilised by IR and CRT, blocked the entrance to the lecture hall where Iván Espinosa de los Monteros was scheduled to speak. They chanted slogans such as "Fascists out of the university" and "They shall not pass."

In response, the PSOE-Sumar government deployed

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dozens of riot police to suppress the demonstrators and ensure the event could proceed. The university ultimately suspended the far-right conference, citing security grounds.

The crackdown on students at Complutense is being spearheaded by the PSOE-Sumar government, following in the footsteps of the previous PSOE-Podemos government's (2020-2023) assault on the democratic rights of the entire working class.

Across Spain, students have faced disciplinary action for protesting official complicity in the government in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians. Since the Zionist genocide began over 16 months ago, the PSOE-Sumar government has armed, traded and allowed its ports to be used to facilitate the Israeli state massacres of Palestinians and Lebanese. Spain also remains on the front-line of support for NATO's war with Russia in Ukraine, which has left half a million dead.

The PSOE-Sumar government has repeatedly deployed riot police to protect far-right provocations. Just days ago, officers violently evicted students from the University of Granada who were peacefully protesting former Vox leader Macarena Olona's talk. Police dragged them, threw them to the ground, and beat them with batons.

It is nearly a year since the first two of six young people from Zaragoza were imprisoned, each sentenced to four years and nine months, for participating in anti-fascist protests in 2019. In January of that year, six youth were arrested in Zaragoza after demonstrating against Vox. Despite the absence of incriminating evidence, the courts handed down prison sentences and fines, invoking the "Gag Law" originally passed by the right-wing Popular Party—now routinely used by PSOE-led governments to criminalise protests and suppress strikes.

Mounting repression of students comes as the government massively increases defence spending, financing it through austerity measures targeting the working class. These policies are deeply unpopular. A November 2024 survey by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) found that only 14 percent of respondents supported significantly higher military spending, compared to 50 percent who prioritised increased funding for healthcare and 42 percent for education.

The rise of the far-right Vox over the past decade has been fuelled by the policies of PSOE, Sumar, and Podemos, whose governments have imposed social cuts, enacted anti-immigrant measures, and escalated support for war and militarism. Their repression of strikes and protests has further alienated wide layers of the population. In the absence of a genuine left alternative, these betrayals have driven many disillusioned and desperate people into the arms of Vox, which now stands as the third largest party in parliament.

Fascism cannot be fought merely by opposing its individual manifestations—on campuses or in parliament. It must be uprooted at its source: the capitalist system, which breeds war, authoritarianism and inequality.

Far-right governments are no longer the exception but increasingly the rule—Meloni in Italy, Orbán in Hungary, Trump in the US, and far-right advances across Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria. In Germany, preparations for war go hand in hand with social cuts, anti-migrant agitation and creeping collaboration with the fascistic AfD.

Spain is no different. The PSOE-Sumar government's embrace of NATO wars, its complicity in genocide, and its systematic use of riot police to suppress protests and strikes, all pave the way for the far-right. Vox is not an aberration but a symptom of the broader degeneration of bourgeois politics.

Real resistance to fascism and war can only come from the working class. It is the only force capable of uniting across borders, standing against imperialism, and defending democratic rights—including those of migrants and youth. These coming struggles must be consciously prepared, organised and given a political perspective: the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a socialist society based on human need, not private profit. That is the programme fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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