

Hundreds of cultural organisations in Spain speak out against war and Europe's massive rearmament drive

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Hundreds of actors, filmmakers, singers, and other cultural workers—joined by more than 16,000 signatories and over 850 social organisations—have launched the manifesto “We refuse to accept rearmament and war in Europe” in opposition to the mass rearmament programme of the European Union and its militaristic drift.

The manifesto also denounces the NATO-backed Zionist genocide in Gaza, coinciding with a separate statement signed by 700 members of the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), criticising the Academy for failing to speak out in defence of Hamdan Ballal, co-director of *No Other Land*, who was brutally assaulted by Israeli settlers and soldiers in the occupied West Bank last week. A further 19,000 people have signed an international petition calling for the protection of Hamdan Ballal and the team behind *No Other Land*.

These statements reflect the widespread opposition among cultural workers and artists to the genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as to the militaristic policies being advanced both by the European Union and the fascistic government of Donald Trump.

The manifesto endorsed by Spanish artists was presented by actors Juan Diego Botto and Carolina Yuste outside the Spanish parliament last Wednesday—the very day Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez stood before that same chamber to defend the acceleration of defence spending. Sánchez plans to increase military spending to 2 percent of GDP, bringing forward the original 2029 deadline. Sánchez has already announced that this escalation will not be submitted to a parliamentary vote but imposed by decree through the Council of Ministers—where he will count on the support of his junior partner in government, the pseudo-left Sumar coalition.

The manifesto opens by stressing the importance of strong social services and peace: “Society needs the security that comes from quality public healthcare and education for all; young people need a home to live in; our elders do not want to see their pensions put at risk; and above all, we do not want our children and grandchildren to experience the horrors of war.”

It then poses a direct challenge to current policy undertaken by the European ruling class: “To what extent, exactly, does the unchecked increase in military spending—proposed for approval by European governments without public debate, without transparency or detail, and with urgency—contribute to that peaceful future?”

The text rejects the wall-to-wall propaganda of the media and the political establishment that rearmament will bring peace, insisting instead that “it will bring us even closer to war.”

In line with the WSWs’s repeated warnings that foreign wars are inevitably accompanied by repression at home, the manifesto notes that “militarised contexts often come hand in hand with setbacks in rights, freedoms, and social policies; they generate fear and social alarm, creating the perfect conditions to normalise mechanisms of repression and authoritarianism, which we are already beginning to witness.”

Significantly, it also challenges the often-repeated imperialist propaganda that rearmament is needed to defend against potential Russian aggression, arguing that “if that were truly the case, the stance towards Netanyahu would be the same as towards Putin.” The manifesto accuses Europe of “remaining silent or, worse still, supporting Israel in its genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, and even persecuting those who denounce it.”

It reminds readers that “the people of our country have

repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to peace and anti-war policies,” recalling the mass protests against the Iraq War and the resistance to Spain’s NATO accession in the mid-1980s.

Criticising the fact that militaristic policies will be paid for by workers through cuts to workers rights and social spending, the manifesto warns that “the money from our public hospitals, our schools and public universities, our health care system, our social protection and safety nets for times of hardship ... is going to be redirected to buy tanks, rifles, fighter jets and missiles for war, simply because the war-mongering elites currently governing Europe and the US have decided so.”

In its final section, it declares that “wars are planned in comfortable offices, but it is the people who pay the price,” concluding with a powerful statement: “We refuse to accept war, because we do not want the peace of the graveyards, because history shows us that the only realistic path to peace is not military, but political. Get to work and pursue peace—we demand it.”

The manifesto has received the backing of some of the most prominent and internationally recognised figures in Spanish cinema, including Javier Bardem, Aitana Sánchez Gijón (*The Machinist*, *A Walk in the Clouds*, *The Chambermaid on the Titanic*), Luis Tosar (*Take My Eyes*, *Maixabel*), and Juan Diego Botto (*1492: Conquest of Paradise*). It has also been endorsed by directors such as Montxo Armendáriz, writers including Manuel Rivas and Isaac Rosa, and musicians like Rozalén and the Spanish-Palestinian composer Marwan.

Support for this manifesto by actors such as Oscar-winning Javier Bardem marks a significant step forward. In 2022, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Bardem and other artists were initially trapped and echoed NATO’s propaganda, reducing the war to Putin’s expansionist ambitions. Bardem joined a protest outside the Russian embassy in Madrid, describing Putin as “a figure who shows every sign of being an imperialist and ultranationalist.”

While the invasion of Ukraine was entirely reactionary, and Putin represents nothing more than the interests of Russian capitalism and the oligarchy—seeking to maintain a degree of autonomy in its dealings with the imperialist powers—the reality remains that those NATO powers are undeniably the main aggressors. They have systematically worked to encircle and threaten Russia ever since the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union over 30 years ago.

Now Bardem and many other artists are taking a step

forward by supporting a manifesto that links war, austerity and repression, while warning of European and US war plans and drawing a connection between the war against Russia and the brutal Zionist genocide in Gaza.

The presentation of the manifesto was backed by MPs from Podemos and Sumar—the two pseudo-left organisations that have served as coalition partners of the Socialist Party (PSOE) since 2019. Their presence was not only a wretched act of hypocrisy, but one that completely contradicts the powerful message of the manifesto.

Since 2020, they have collaborated with the PSOE in launching the largest increase in military spending in Spanish history, supported NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine, and maintained arms trade with Israel. Their attendance at such events is nothing more than an attempt to obscure the fact that they are fully embedded in the Spanish and NATO-aligned capitalist, militarist, and imperialist apparatus.

Despite the presence of Podemos and Sumar, this manifesto represents a very important step forward, revealing the deep opposition within Spain’s cultural sphere to militarism and rising military expenditure. It reflects the sentiments of the working class, which does not want to see its social rights destroyed in exchange for the purchase of weapons.

However, it must be stressed that appealing to the European Union will lead nowhere. Over the past decades, European governments have backed US wars across the Balkans, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa. Today they support the war in Ukraine and back Netanyahu’s far-right regime and its genocide against the Palestinian people. Domestically, they are imposing brutal austerity measures and increasingly integrating neo-fascist parties into power and implementing their policies.

These governments cannot be expected to change course. The social force that must be mobilized in struggle based on the broader opposition to war expressed by these artists is the working class.



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