

Historic protests in Spain oppose Gaza genocide

Santiago Guillen
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The detaining of the Sumud flotilla by Israel in a flagrant act of piracy in international waters with the support of the imperialist powers has unleashed an international wave of mass outrage, with mass protests in major cities across Spain and all of Europe.

A million people marched on Friday in Rome, paralyzing the Italian capital, and tens of thousands marched in Italian cities including Turin and Milan. In Paris, around 10,000 protesters held signs declaring “We are all Palestinians” “Zionist state, terrorist state,” and “Today and forever, resistance.” There were also mass protests in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyon, and Mulhouse in France, and in the Belgian city of Liège.

In London, a protest against the banning of Palestinian Action, after the group organized protests against Donald Trump and Israel, led to over 500 arrests, many of those arrested being over 70 years old. Mass protests took place also in Dublin, Amsterdam, and Lisbon.

This mobilization also shook Spain, which saw the largest protests since the beginning of the Zionist genocide in Gaza. By their size, they recalled the mass protests that took place in 2003 against Spain’s participation in the illegal, US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Already on Thursday morning, a student strike took place across Spain, and in the afternoon, thousands of people spontaneously poured onto the streets to protest the seizure of the Global Sumud Flotilla. Saturday’s demonstrations went far beyond everything that had been predicted, however.

On Saturday morning, 300,000 people joined a march in Barcelona planned by a collective of 600 organizations which blockaded the Paseo de Gracia and marched to the Arch of Triumph. The manifesto of the collective said, “The complicit states of the global

North, including Spain, have decided to take upon themselves the legalization of a genocide”. It called for a total embargo on weapons, the breaking of relations and the ending of all association of the European Union (EU) with Israel.

Before the demonstration, one of the spokespeople of the Sumud Flotilla in Catalonia, Pablo Castilla, declared: “Currently, more than 450 comrades in the flotilla are secure in Israeli prisons. We know they have begun legal procedures without written assistance, and we denounce the threats and aggressions they have undergone, particularly the Arab comrades, who have been the worst treated.”

The president of the Palestinian Community of Catalonia, Natàlia Abu-Sharar, has declared that that the supposed “peace plan for Gaza” is only a “cover to continue murdering the Palestinian people.”

At the end of the day, Madrid saw a historic demonstration with over 500,000 participants, who went from the Glorieta d’Atocha to Callao Square. During the march, there were chants such as “From the river to the sea, Palestine will conquer,” “Struggle is the only way,” “Palestine will not be sold,” “Boycott Israel,” “Gaza, resist, Madrid is rising up.” Many protest signs denounced the complicity of the European Union and the Spanish government with Israel and the Gaza genocide.

At the demonstration, Saido Ghodaieh, the president of the Spanish-Palestinian Association of Jerusalem, demanded “a real treatment to stop the ethnic cleansing that is taking place in Palestine,” and that “international law be respected and that war criminals be taken before a tribunal and prosecuted.”

Laura Ferre of RESCOP (Solidarity Network against the Occupation of Palestine), another association that helped organized the protest, declared that the arms

embargo on Israel announced by the Spanish government was “not sufficient. What the Palestinian people needs today is a total embargo.”

Other major Spanish cities also saw an outpouring of popular outrage against the genocide. Tens of thousands of people marched in the streets in Valencia, Seville, Malaga, Cadiz, Jaen, Tenerife, Vigo, Saint-Jacques-of-Compostela, Logrono, Pampeluna, Murcia, Valladolid, and beyond.

The pseudo-left is very aware of the vast support for the Palestinian cause in the Spanish and European working class. It is working closely with the union bureaucracies to tie this opposition to the bankrupt perspective of sending impotent petitions to the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar coalition government.

Sumar is trying to pretend that the government in which it is participating is doing something. Thus its leader, Lara Hernandez, declared: “Anyone who takes a position in favor of the validation of the royal decree on the arms embargo is situating themselves on the side of humanity and the side of the defense of the Palestinian cause.”

Podemos leader Ione Belarra has asked of the government that it break relations with “genocides” and called for the freeing of Spanish members of the Sumud flotilla now detained by Israel.

On the same line, the Pabloite Anticapitalistas organization declared: “These are mobilizations that demand that the government break relations with Israel, that it organize a total arms embargo to condemn the genocide and its accomplices and support the struggle of the Palestinian people for their own liberation.”

These are useless appeals. The PSOE ruled in coalition first with Podemos and then with the Podemos split-off Sumar, maintaining throughout an active collaboration with Israel and the Zionist genocide. In practice, it maintained intact the military and commercial relations with Israel and placed Spanish ports at the disposal of the Zionist state to transport weapons used to exterminate the Palestinians.

In response to working class anger, the PSOE-Sumar government is changing its public statements and calling for measures to pressure Israel. But this is an impotent method that has no significant impact. The arms embargo that it is claiming to approve will leave the bulk of the military collaboration with Israel intact, allow contracts with the Israeli defense industry, and do

nothing to establish an inspection mechanism for Israeli ships arriving in Spanish ports, thus preventing any arms interdiction efforts.

For their part, the union bureaucracies are trying to let off steam by holding partial strikes. The two largest unions, the Workers Commissions (CCOO), close to Podemos and Sumar, and the PSOE-linked General Union of Labor (UGT) have called two-hour strikes for October 15 without issuing any type of demands, proposing any follow-up action or meetings. These are strikes whose objectives, from the outset, are to have as small an impact as possible.

The pseudo-left and the union bureaucracies are trying to drown the protests and prevent them from growing into a movement that could threaten the interests of capitalism and imperialism, both in Spain and internationally. These are organizations that can only lead the workers to defeat, and the Palestinians to extermination.

As the WSWs explained in its October 3 perspective, “What workers need are new organisations under their control—rank-and-file committees—so they can plan and direct a mass movement capable of stopping the machinery of imperialist war and genocide in its tracks.”

A united struggle to defend the Palestinian people and oppose austerity and war, it explained, “necessarily requires a movement committed to ousting the financial oligarchy from power and the overturn of capitalism, the root cause of imperialist barbarism that finds its most appalling expression in Gaza.”



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