

European Union intensifies its fascist migration policies in wake of Ceuta

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The refugee tragedy in Ceuta has starkly illustrated how the European Union (EU) is putting the far right's inhumane migration policy into practice and systematically intensifying it.

Although at least 99 people lost their lives during the attempt by tens of thousands of refugees to reach the Spanish exclave of Ceuta, which borders Morocco, not a single word of regret or empathy was heard from official political circles. The desperate young people, who are risking their lives to escape an existence without jobs, income or prospects for the future, were treated like a hostile invading army.

Spanish Social Democratic Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez took the lead, condemning the refugees' entry as an "attack" and a "violation of Spain's territorial integrity." Sánchez sent the army to Ceuta to drive the refugees back and literally starved them out. All shops were closed following a public appeal, leaving tens of thousands of people without water or bread. Even the willingness of local residents to help could not change this.

In doing so, Sánchez ignored both the right of unaccompanied minors to an individual review and a ruling by the Spanish Supreme Court, according to which migrants arriving by sea may not be deported without due process. As the route from Ceuta to the Spanish mainland is strictly controlled, the vast majority of refugees returned to Morocco within a day.

Sánchez's coalition partner, the pseudo-left Sumar, supported his brutal and illegal actions. Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz shifted the blame onto Morocco: She accused the country of using desperate civilians as a means of exerting pressure on Spain and of having caused the deaths of dozens of people.

Yet for the EU and most European governments, Sánchez's approach was not tough enough. While the leader of the Francoist party Vox, Santiago Abascal, and

other right-wing extremists marched through the streets of Ceuta shouting "Pedro Sánchez, son of a bitch," the EU took the same line.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen described the images from Ceuta as "unacceptable." "We cannot allow anyone to enter our Union without complying with our rules," she wrote on X.

Twenty-two European heads of state and government accused the Spanish government in an open letter of encouraging irregular migration. They threatened to suspend the Schengen Agreement, which Italy promptly did.

The open letter was initiated by the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her Danish counterpart, Mette Frederiksen. The neo-fascist and the Social Democrat have long been working together to tighten European migration policy. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz also signed the letter. Only Ireland, France, Luxembourg and Portugal did not sign it.

The letter did not limit its criticism of Spain to the events in Ceuta. It also attacked the ruling by the Spanish Supreme Court, which granted certain rights to migrants arriving by sea. The letter stated that the ruling has been "used to trigger this attack and to abuse our migration and asylum system."

The letter also sharply criticised the Spanish government's decision, taken a few months ago, to allow around 500,000 irregular migrants, who applied for asylum in Spain before the end of 2025, to regularise their residence status. It described this as a "pull factor" that weakens the EU's external borders.

In fact, the Sánchez government's decision was based not on humanitarian but on purely economic grounds. The Spanish economy is heavily reliant on the exploitation of low-paid labour. The agricultural sector, in particular, which supplies the whole of Europe with fruit and vegetables, needs this labour for its labour-intensive

harvests.

US President Donald Trump also weighed in. Through his spokesperson, he stated that he had long warned of the consequences of the “far-left globalist” immigration policy implemented in Europe: “Spain and other countries that have adopted this destructive philosophy should change course immediately, or they risk their own downfall.”

Sánchez responded to the open letter from the European heads of government with an angry reply to von der Leyen. In it, he accused his critics of prejudice, misinformation, ignorance and political calculation, and boasted that Spain’s external border is among the least porous in the EU. The number of irregular entries is only about half that of Italy.

A conference of EU interior ministers, which took place online on Tuesday, then sought to smooth things over. The European powers, in the process of building up the EU as a military and geopolitical counterweight to the US, do not currently want an open political rift within the EU. EU Commissioner Magnus Brunner, responsible for Home Affairs and Migration, praised the Spanish government and thanked it for having “restored order.” Europe had passed the stress test, he said.

The interior ministers agreed to a further crackdown on their migration policy. Although the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which allows asylum procedures to be outsourced to the external borders, only came into force a few weeks ago, Brunner announced a further five-point plan.

The plan aims, among other things, to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit—that is, with the dictators and armed militias who oppress migrants on behalf of the EU—further expand the protection of the external border through Frontex, step up action against people-smugglers and improve the detection of disinformation on social media. German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt called for the EU’s external borders to be further reinforced, “including with physical barriers.”

It would be naïve to view this expansion of a comprehensive apparatus of surveillance, defence and repression against migrants merely as an instrument of reactionary anti-refugee policy. Brunner admitted that the sealing off of Europe is already extremely effective. The number of irregular border crossings has fallen by 55 percent over the past two years and by 40 percent this year. Europe has “never had as much control over illegal migration as it does at present,” he said.

Even the events in Ceuta, where over 100 refugees died but not a single one reached the European mainland, would not justify any further tightening of migration policy, even from the reactionary standpoint of the governments.

In reality, much more is at stake. Migrants and refugees are being targeted, but the aim is the entire working class. The crackdown on migrants serves to divide the international working class and to build a police state that suppresses every form of social and political opposition—against redundancies, cuts to social services, rearmament and war.

At the borders of Fortress Europe, concentration camps and lawless zones are springing up, where men, women and entire families who have committed no crime are imprisoned and mistreated without trial. Frontex and the national police and intelligence services are being integrated into a comprehensive apparatus of surveillance and repression, beside which Hitler’s Gestapo seems primitive. CCTV, facial recognition, the tapping of mobile phones and computers and specialised software such as Palantir’s Gotham enable the seamless surveillance of the entire population.

In the US, President Trump has made the war on migrants the centrepiece of his efforts to build a police state. Masked officers from the ICE Gestapo are tracking down and arresting workers, some of whom have been living and working in the US for decades. In the first week of July alone, ICE arrested 10,000 people. Anyone who protests against this risks their life—as Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti had done. Tens of thousands are languishing in concentration camps, often run by private companies. Europe is following the same path.

Workers must unconditionally defend the democratic rights of refugees and migrants. This is not only a humanitarian obligation but a prerequisite for defending their own social and democratic rights. Defending migrants means defending the working class as a whole. It is part of the unity of the international working class in the struggle for the world socialist revolution.



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