

Hundreds of thousands protest across Spain for housing, as calls for general strike grow

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Hundreds of thousands of workers and youth took to the streets across Spain again on Saturday to protest the housing crisis and the eviction of Maricarmen, after parliament rejected two decrees banning evictions proposed by the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government. More than 50 cities took part in the mobilizations, which were dominated by the call: “Towards a general strike.”

In Madrid, four columns converged on Cibeles Square. The Tenants’ Union, which called the protest, put attendance at 500,000 people. Slogans reflected widespread opposition to real estate speculation, the PSOE-Sumar government and right-wing politicians. Protesters chanted against rentiers and investment funds: “Neither empty homes nor homeless people!”, “The invaders are the investors,” “Get rentiers out of our neighborhoods,” and “Homes to live in, not to invest in.” There were banners and chants of “We need a general strike now.”

Access to housing has become a class issue, especially affecting younger workers, and what is emerging is an explosive mass mobilization of youth and workers against the capitalist parties which the media promote as the “left” in Spain.

There was deep opposition to the PSOE-Sumar government and its predecessor the PSOE-Podemos government, which claim to be “progressive” but carry out anti-worker policies. Protesters chanted, “Where is the progressive government?”, “Rentier guilty, government responsible,” “PSOE and Sumar, traitors responsible,” “Who are you governing for?” and “Eight days of popular support have achieved more than eight years of progressive government.”

Saturday’s mobilization was the culmination of a week of protests centred around the encampment at Puerta del Sol in central Madrid. The encampment began on September 26, following the protests called after Maricarmen’s eviction. This weekend, it had more than 1,200 tents.

Encampments have spread across Spain, even as youth protests and strikes shake France and spread across Europe. In Barcelona, the encampment in Plaça de Catalunya had

more than 500 tents. In Seville, hundreds of people took part in the encampment, with more than 100 tents, while Málaga saw between 150 and 170 tents. Encampments are also ongoing in Valencia, Bilbao, Santander, Palma and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Beyond Madrid, demonstrations took place in cities including Seville, Bilbao, San Sebastián, Vitoria, Pamplona, Málaga, Santander, Palma, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Cádiz, Huelva, Granada, Santiago de Compostela, León, Zaragoza, Alicante, Castellón, Girona, Vigo, A Coruña, Lugo and Valladolid.

In Valencia, thousands of demonstrators clashed with police at the Palau de Les Arts, where the “Valencia Real Estate Summit 2026,” a conference on real estate investment, was held. A group of protesters attempted to break through the police cordon and enter the building. Police responded with baton charges, tear gas and rubber bullets, arresting five people.

The mobilization began after the eviction of 87-year-old Maricarmen, who had lived in her home in Madrid’s Retiro district since 1956. After three previous attempts were thwarted by popular protests, the eviction was carried out on September 23. Maricarmen was carried out on a stretcher and taken to the Gregorio Marañón Hospital. Her case highlighted the unaffordability of housing for workers in Spain and internationally.

For eight years, the PSOE, then PSOE-Podemos and finally PSOE-Sumar governments have taken no measures to resolve the housing crisis. Rents and house prices kept rising, while evictions and real estate speculation mounted.

The Spanish social democrats and their pseudo-left allies are directly implicated in the persecution of renters. CaixaBank is currently Spain’s largest identified private landlord, with nearly 22,000 rental properties, more than the approximately 19,600 owned by Blackstone. The state holds around 18 percent of CaixaBank’s shares and sits on its board of directors.

At no point have the successive governments involving the PSOE, Podemos or Sumar sought to use this position to

defend renters. On the contrary, more than 25,500 evictions and court-ordered repossessions were carried out in 2025 alone.

Staggered by the mass protests, the PSOE-Sumar government hastily approved two emergency housing decrees last week. These included a temporary suspension of evictions for certain categories of vulnerable tenants until 2030; limited restrictions on annual rent increases, without reducing already exorbitant rents; and extensions of existing rental contracts.

These decrees were merely stopgap measures. They did not address the 12.2 percent yearly rise in house prices, or the fact that renting a home now costs 98.7 percent of the average monthly salary of a young worker. These decrees did not address the essential problem underlying the housing crisis: real estate speculation and the anarchy of financial markets, that is, the capitalist system itself.

However, legislators of the right-wing Catalan nationalist party Junts joined those of the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the fascist Vox party in rejecting the decrees.

A confrontation is emerging between the working class and the entire Spanish political establishment that poses critical issues of political perspective and strategy. Broad layers of workers and youth sense that only a general strike, that is, the full mobilization of the social power of the working class, can resolve the social problems they face. However, this raises the question of how to build a movement to prepare a general strike, and what tasks would face the working class if and when a general strike erupts.

Tenants' Union spokesperson Valeria Racu said on October 3 that the protests were "a warning to those in power," and that "power is returning to the streets." However, she proposed that workers leave the preparation of a general strike to the union bureaucracies. She said, "The general strike does not yet have a date; we cannot set it ourselves. For it to truly be historic, there has to be a consensus among all the labor unions, but it will probably be soon because people in the streets are demanding it."

But the two main Spanish union federations, the General Confederation of Labor (UGT) and Workers Commissions (CCOO), are in reality seeking to contain and defuse the movement.

UGT General Secretary Pepe Álvarez responded to demands for a general strike by saying that it is "easy to announce and register, and somewhat more complicated to carry out." He said the union bureaucracies should first hold an "internal debate" and speak with the Tenants' Union.

CCOO Secretary Unai Sordo vaguely proposed to participate in the movement, saying that the mobilizations should "have a labor dimension that we will determine in the coming days."

The October 3 mobilization demonstrates that there is an enormous readiness to fight. But that readiness requires a political organization independent of the trade union bureaucracies and the parties that defend the existing order.

Workers and youth must take the struggle out of the hands of the union bureaucracies. They are closely linked to the PSOE-Sumar government—the UGT bureaucracy with the PSOE, and the CCOO bureaucracy with Stalinist elements in Sumar. To call on the workers to wait for the union bureaucracies to organize a struggle is, in reality, to delay and hamper the growth of the class struggle.

The issue is not to exert abstract pressure on the union leaderships to "do something" but to build organizations from below capable of translating the enormous social anger in the working class into social struggle and, ultimately, international revolutionary action.

Workers must organize assemblies in their workplaces and neighborhoods and form rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucracies. These committees can coordinate with one another, unite workers of different industries and different countries, and collectively prepare a general strike. The struggle must advance from the defense of housing towards a general offensive by the working class, linking the fight for housing with the struggle against war, austerity, low wages and layoffs.

Workers cannot resolve the housing crisis without confronting the capitalist system that produces it. For housing and other necessities to cease to be commodities subject to speculation and become social rights, the privileges of the capitalist oligarchy must be abolished, in Spain and internationally.

Arming the working class with such a political perspective requires building a revolutionary leadership of the working class, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, in Spain and across Europe, fighting for the international unity of the working class and the socialist reorganization of society.



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