

Spanish snap elections pose threat of far-right dictatorship

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Yesterday, faced with mass protests nationwide demanding the right to housing, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced the dissolution of parliament and general elections for November 29. The election campaign will take place amid mounting class conflict. However, polls show that, were the election held today, the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the neo-fascist Vox party would win, returning Spain's first far-right government since the Francoite dictatorship ended in 1978.

Within hours of Sánchez calling the election, Vox leader Santiago Abascal set out his programme for joint government with the PP: "National priority, so that Spaniards are not discriminated against in their own land; deregulation, to remove from our economy all the corruption, ideology and confiscatory intent; and remigration, to reverse the migratory invasion."

This means discrimination in favour of Spanish nationals in access to public services, austerity and deregulation to fund big business, and mass expulsions of immigrants. This was visible in Ceuta this summer, where at least 140 migrants died attempting to reach Spanish territory as the PSOE-Sumar government deployed the army and police and carried out mass expulsions. Vox denounced even this as "treason," however. It backed mass anti-migrant demonstrations, pogrom attacks on migrant camps and continues to demand deportations of millions.

The Spanish right is also threatening not to accept an election defeat, leaving open the possibility that it could seek to forcibly overturn a defeat at the polls. Abascal said that Sánchez might "manipulate this electoral process," claiming that Sánchez is "capable of absolutely anything." Madrid regional President Isabel Díaz Ayuso of the PP declared: "I ask everyone not even to think of voting by post," while warning of possible *pucherazo*—electoral fraud.

Such threats are particularly ominous, as is well known that elements of the Spanish officer corps close to Vox are plotting and indeed openly calling for a coup and military dictatorship.

Just three weeks ago retired Spanish Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Bendala Ayuso stated that "it is time for the Armed Forces to assume their responsibility before the homeland" at Madrid's Casino Militar, an institution run by retired members of the Armed Forces. Dismissing the parliamentary opposition

as "inept and passive," Bendala called for military intervention to establish a "provisional emergency government" and declare a state of emergency.

In the statements of Vox and the PP, two fascistic playbooks are intersecting. One is rooted in the history of the Spanish far right: portraying an electoral victory by the left as fraudulent to justify a coup. After the Popular Front's victory in February 1936, the Franco dictatorship claimed that the elections had been a fraud, to legitimise Franco's July 1936 coup that began the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War.

The other is the more immediate precedent set by US President Donald Trump, whose administration has developed ties to Vox. This is to systematically discredit the electoral process before voting begins, single out postal ballots as inherently suspect and declare an adverse result fraudulent. This culminated in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt, when Trump tried to block the constitutionally-mandated transfer of power by inciting his supporters to storm the US Congress while it certified the election results.

A half-century after Spain began its so-called "transition" to democracy after Franco's death in 1975, the project of a capitalist democracy built on the foundations of the Francoite state is collapsing. Amid the mass strikes and social struggles of the 1970s, the PSOE and the Stalinist Communist Party of Spain (PCE) worked to prevent a revolutionary reckoning with Francoism. They told workers that integration into the European Economic Community and NATO would guarantee Spain a prosperous, democratic future. These arrangements, codified in Spain's 1978 Constitution, are now threatened with collapse.

Workers cannot entrust the struggle against the danger of fascism and military dictatorship to the reactionary, anti-worker parties that make up the current PSOE-Sumar government and its political periphery.

Yesterday, Sánchez presented the election as a struggle to defend democracy and social progress. Boasting that his government had achieved "the best economic, social and environmental results" of any democratic administration, he acknowledged popular "dissatisfaction" but argued that "to do more, we need to renew and expand people's support." He called for a "much broader, progressive majority" with which

to “win new social advances and continue transforming Spain.”

The choice on November 29, Sánchez declared, was whether Spain would join the “ultra-right wave” or remain “a bastion of openness, social justice and environmental responsibility” supposedly represented by his government.

The PSOE’s pseudo-left allies adopted similar positions. Mónica García, a leader in the new Sumar-led Broad Front, the PSOE’s government coalition partner, endorsed Sánchez’s decision. She declared “We are going to put all our commitment into once again securing a progressive government” and “do whatever is necessary” to “stop the far right.”

One of Podemos’ leaders, Irene Montero, called for open primaries to choose a common candidacy to the left of the PSOE. She argued that such a candidacy should represent the social majority demanding an end to profiteering from housing, lower rents and the defence of peace, insisting: “There is no time to lose, and we have a lot of work to do.”

But these comments all ignore the decisive political question: How can it be that, after nearly nine years of PSOE-led governments, including six in coalition with either Podemos or its split-off, Sumar, the heirs of Francoism are close to taking power again?

The answer lies above all in the record of the governments headed by Sánchez himself: austerity, imperialist war and brutal repression of the working class. More than one in four people in Spain—25.7 percent of the population—were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2025, including one-third of all children. Youth unemployment stood at 23 percent. At the opposite pole of society, Spain’s six largest banks amassed a record €34 billion in profits in 2025, 7 percent more than the previous year.

The same contradiction runs through Sánchez’s claim to be a pacifist. In his speech announcing the election, Sánchez boasted of “supporting Ukraine,” that is, the far-right, NATO-backed government fighting a war with Russia which threatens to spiral into a nuclear war. Under Sánchez, defence spending has reached the record level of €66 billion in 2025, around 4.1 percent of GDP, with more than €80 billion projected for 2026. This is the largest military build-up in Spain’s post-Franco history.

Nowhere is the gulf between the government’s claims and social reality more visible than in housing. The average cost of renting a home is now equivalent to 98.7 percent of the average salary of a young worker. This produced the crisis that led to Sánchez’s snap election. The eviction of an 87-year-old Madrid tenant became a lightning rod for accumulated anger, triggering mass protests. Faced with mounting pressure, PSOE and Sumar rushed out limited emergency housing measures, only for these to be defeated in parliament last Friday by the PP, Vox and the right-wing Catalan nationalist Junts.

The next day, however, hundreds of thousands demonstrated across more than 50 Spanish cities. Sections of the movement

openly called for a general strike. A general strike would pose the fundamental question of which class decides society’s priorities: whether housing, wages, pensions and public services are to be subordinated to private profit, military expenditure and the enrichment of a financial oligarchy, or organised according to social need.

The Spanish movement is, critically, part of an emerging European mass movement against war and austerity. In France, high school protests and public sector strikes are shaking the foundations of President Emmanuel Macron’s government. While public sector strikes are also erupting in Portugal, protests against conscription and military service are ongoing inside Germany.

This emerging mass movement of workers and youth on housing must take up the struggle against war and the fascist danger. It cannot leave this struggle to parties like the PSOE, Sumar or Podemos. Rather, the political energy mobilized in defense of housing must be turned to opposing fascism, militarism and the capitalist ruling elites that stand behind them, and uniting native and immigrant workers around a defense of their shared class interests.

This means building independent, rank-and-file organizations in the working class, capable of mobilizing workers against police repression or coup attempts, in addition to austerity and militarism. This cannot be done through supporting union bureaucracies tied to the current ruling parties. Building and maintaining such organizations requires a relentless political struggle against parties like the PSOE, Podemos, Sumar and their affiliated union bureaucracies, which seek to subordinate workers to parliament and to “lesser evil” politics.

This means fighting to build a new revolutionary vanguard of the working class, a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Spain and across Europe, fighting to unify struggles over housing, wages, democratic rights and war into a movement for workers’ power and a socialist revolution to create the United Socialist States of Europe.



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