

# Rail workers to strike as train crash in Spain's Toledo province kills at least 68

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At least 68 people are dead after a high-speed train crash near Urda in Toledo province yesterday around 8:53 a.m. With 107 people hospitalized, including 15 still in critical condition, the death toll could rise further.

The crash occurred between two southbound trains heading from Madrid to Seville. Before the accident, a computer failure reportedly took down the outdated LZB track monitoring system used on rail lines linking Madrid to Seville and to other cities in Spain's Andalucia province. As a result, one train, operated by Spanish state operator Renfe, collided at high speed with another, operated by Italian company Iryo, which was stationary on the track.

The precise causes of the accident remain disputed, with state officials, railway companies, engineers and trade unions offering conflicting accounts of events before the crash, and how such a catastrophic breakdown of rail safety could have occurred. Renfe has suspended operations on the Madrid-Andalucia rail network while these investigations proceed.

The accident is however clearly bound up with systemic underfunding of infrastructure and security by the entire political establishment, including the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government. It is the second deadly train crash this year on this section of Spain's rail network train grid, linking Madrid to Andalucia, after a crash in Adamuz killed 42 in January. On October 16, the SEMAF train drivers union had called a strike of Renfe workers for today to protest the failure of the state and rail companies to improve security conditions after the Adamuz crash.

Yesterday afternoon, PSOE Minister Oscar Puentes gave a press conference on the Urda accident. "The control system at Urda broke down and it no longer had operating its LZB security system, which automatically stopped all trains on this 63-kilometer stretch," he said. Afterwards, according to Puentes, operators at the state-

owned rail infrastructure operator Adif took control of the network manually and authorized the Renfe train to resume travel though a red light, a decision Puentes called "inexplicable."

Puentes rejected calls for his resignation, declaring: "In this moment, I am not thinking about resigning, I am not in an emotional situation to think about that."

In response, the CSIF civil servants union issued a statement demanding Puentes resign and criticizing his decision to blame the accident on Adif personnel. It posted on X: "We demand that the Government respect the investigation and the presumption of innocence for the head of traffic at Adif." It attacked Puentes for using Adif personnel as "scapegoats" and stressed that it had warned in September of "excess hours in Adif's working days."

The Italian train operator Iryo also criticized Puentes, denying his claim that Iryo's train driver had received orders to get underway from Adif before her train was rear-ended by the Renfe train.

José Trigueros, the president of Spain's Civil Engineering Association, told Europapress: "It cannot be that our infrastructure is run by incompetent people, who should take care of their ministry and not with posting tweets. The state of our infrastructure is disgraceful. I hold the minister responsible."

Ricardo Díaz Martínez, an industrial security engineer, also rejected Puentes' claim human error was the cause. "We are in the 21st century, already fully in the era of artificial intelligence, so those excuses are really pathetic. ... If we can geolocalize planes, are you telling me we cannot perfectly locate trains, that can only go forward and back in a line?" he told COPE news. He added, "human error cannot by itself cause such a tragedy because there are automated security systems ... If you tell me that human error can cause such a tragedy, I will never take a train again in my life."

The failure to fund train security is bound up with the

reactionary policies pursued by the so-called “progressive” PSOE-Podemos and then PSOE-Sumar governments over the last decade. They partially privatized the railways, handed out tens of billions of euros in EU bailout funds to major corporations, and doubled publicly-reported military spending to €34 billion. While the wealth of Spain’s richest man, Ormanzia Ortega, surged from €70 to €110 billion, social inequality surged, and essential infrastructure was starved of funding.

The response to the rail disaster is bound up with the growing mass protests in Spain and across Europe and the deepening crisis of the PSOE-Sumar government. Mass protests against high housing costs and the eviction and death of Maricarmen in Madrid have mobilized millions of people nationwide in Spain. The PSOE-Sumar government responded by calling new elections for November 29, to try to press voters to support the PSOE and Sumar against the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the neo-fascist Vox party.

A large crowd of protesters gathered outside the Transport Ministry after 8:30 p.m. yesterday, chanting slogans like “Puentes is a murderer” and “We demand those responsible pay.” Riot police charged and fired tear gas at the protesters. One youth who was present at the Transport Ministry protest told Europa Press: “We were not doing anything at the time, but they pushed us violently and began saying we should leave. When they saw that many people were not moving, they tear-gassed us. There were elderly people present.”

The far-right Vox party held an alternative protest against the PSOE-Sumar government, for which there was a small turnout, on Cibeles Square.

Before yesterday’s accident, a strike had already been called on October 16 by the SEMAF union, to take place today by Renfe train drivers to protest the failure of Renfe, Adif and the government to take proper security measures after the Adamuz crash.

The SEMAF union said it called the strike as it “noticed, in the recent meeting with the Transport Ministry, Adif, the AESF and Renfe, that agreements signed on rail security, emergency weather protocols, new driver hiring and reliability of rolling stock were blocked administratively. After consulting the Conflicts Commission on October 5, and today’s meeting, the conclusion we have drawn is clear: everything is still as paralyzed as it was in May.” SEMAF criticized the “bureaucratic slowness” of the government and rail companies.

Statements by major outlets of the Spanish bourgeois press cannot hide their fear that the train crashes will provoke explosive public anger at a bankrupt existing order. The social-democratic *El Pais* published an editorial, titled “Undefendable catastrophes,” which declared: “The second deadly collision of two high speed trains in less than a year is a blow to the confidence of the citizenry in the state.”

The right-wing *El Mundo* admitted the disastrous impacts of underfunding while rail privatization increased traffic: “For years there have been more incidents, delays, warnings from professionals and denunciations on the need for maintenance of a network subject to increasing pressure. Rail liberalization multiplied rail traffic, but the capacity of maintenance and upkeep of infrastructure did not increase at the same rhythm.”

These rail disasters are warnings that society cannot function if a capitalist oligarchy monopolizes vast wealth and plunges social resources into the military and war. The fact that these accidents are the product of the PSOE-Podemos or PSOE-Sumar governments, not those of the right-wing PP or Vox, only underscores the bankruptcy of the existing order. There is no progressive alternative within Spanish capitalism to the right-wing policies of the so-called “progressive” government.

As calls circulate among housing protesters in Spain for a general strike, the working class must be mobilized as broadly as possible against the PSOE-Sumar government and the entire ruling class. The basic functioning of society requires a broader, socialist struggle of the working class to expropriate capitalist oligarchs who plunder society and use the wealth created by the workers not for private profit, but to meet social needs.



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