Mass strikes erupt across Spain ahead of November 11 nationwide stoppage

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Mass strikes and protests are erupting across Spain amid a growing wave of working-class struggles sweeping Europe. Railway workers, metalworkers, teachers, university staff, doctors and workers in other industries have struck or are preparing strikes. These struggles are unfolding just days before a nationwide stoppage on November 11 and three weeks before Spain's November 29 general election.

On October 29, a 24-hour protest railway strike caused widespread disruption across Spain, just one day after the Urda disaster. The collision between a Renfe high-speed train and a stationary Iryo train killed 69 people. Called by the Spanish Train Drivers' Union (SEMAF) on October 16—almost two weeks before the Urda disaster—demanding improvements in railway safety affected commuter, it disrupted regional and long-distance services across the country. According to the Spanish National Railway Network, Renfe, nearly a third of scheduled public-service trains did not depart. In Madrid and Catalonia, it was nearly half of the commuter services.

SEMAF has announced a further 24-hour strike at Renfe on November 10, followed by partial stoppages on November 12. Train drivers employed by private high-speed operator Ouigo are preparing partial strikes on November 6 and 9. Workers at Adif, the state-owned railway infrastructure manager, are preparing industrial action on November 17, to demand railway safety and better working conditions.

The Urda catastrophe is a social crime for which Spain's capitalist ruling class and successive Socialist Party (PSOE)-led governments, first in coalition with the pseudo-left Podemos and later with Sumar, bear political responsibility. It exposes the consequences of years of systematic underfunding of railway infrastructure, maintenance and safety. For more than eight years, PSOE-led governments have presided over this deterioration while advancing the liberalisation of high-speed rail and diverting billions to the military.

Approximately 35,000 metalworkers in the southeastern region of Murcia have entered their tenth day of indefinite strike action, affecting around 8,500 companies, including contractors working at the Navantia shipyards, the Repsol refinery and industrial facilities throughout Cartagena, Murcia, Molina de Segura, Lorquí and Lorca. The first day saw confrontations in the Valle de Escombreras industrial complex, where thousands of workers blocked access to key installations. The PSOE-Sumar government deployed the Guardia Civil, which fired rubber bullets and tear gas against pickets. The region's government delegate, Francisco Lucas—the secretary general of the PSOE's regional branch—acknowledged personally giving instructions for the repression even before the strike.

The scale of the strike reflects anger among metal workers over years of stagnant wages, dangerous working conditions and insecure employment. "For €1,200, we risk our lives every day," Ismael, a scaffolder with 24 years of experience, told *Cadena SER*. He described the fears his family experiences because of the dangers of his work. "My daughter is waiting at home to see whether I return or not," he said. Manuel Arroyo, who has worked in the metal industry since 1999, reported earning just €100 more than he did in 2003, with a monthly wage of approximately €1,250. His family could only survive because his wife was also employed.

The conditions are particularly severe for workers employed by subcontracting companies at the Repsol refinery and the Navantia shipyards, Spain's state-owned military shipbuilding company which produces warships and advanced submarines. Despite the enormous sums invested in these military programmes, workers receive poverty wages. They have displayed the slogan "We make submarines for 1,000 euros."

At the centre of the wider dispute is the demand to abolish the compensation and absorption provisions in the collective agreement. These allow employers to offset negotiated wage increases against existing salary supplements, potentially leaving workers with no actual improvement in take-home pay.

Following negotiations on November 2, the Workers'

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Commissions (CCOO) indicated its willingness to submit FREMM's revised offer to its members, while the General Union of Workers (UGT) and USO rejected the proposal as insufficient and insisted that the strike continue. A further negotiating session on November 4 ended without substantive progress. The revised offer reportedly includes wage guarantees and the withdrawal of an earlier employer proposal to worsen sickness benefits. CCOO has announced a further vote on the employers' proposal for November 6, while UGT and USO continue to support the strike.

These developments follow the rejection by workers of an earlier preliminary agreement negotiated by CCOO and FREMM in July. The agreement proposed a nominal wage increase of 15 percent over four years, from 2026 to 2029, but retained provisions allowing employers to absorb wage increases into existing supplements. It also included a reduction in temporary incapacity benefits after 150 days of sick leave, while an inflation-linked wage review would not take effect until 2030. The agreement was rejected by 50.85 percent of those voting.

In Madrid, approximately 65,000 public school teachers have been called to participate in an indefinite campaign of strikes and stoppages that began on October 14. Teachers are demanding a €600 monthly salary increase, reduced teaching hours, smaller classes, additional staff and improvements to deteriorating school infrastructure. Partial stoppages have continued into November, with further action scheduled throughout the remainder of the academic term.

In Castilla y León, around 30,000 public school teachers were called to strike Wednesday over wages, staffing shortages and deteriorating working conditions. Hundreds demonstrated in Valladolid and other cities, demanding that the regional government honour previous commitments to improve pay and working conditions. Their regional salary supplement have been frozen since 2006. Teachers in Catalonia are also preparing to strike for November 26 over the same issues.

Doctors in several regions have launched strikes over deteriorating pay and working conditions, severe staffing shortages and compulsory 24-hour shifts. In the Canary Islands, doctors held a strike Thursday, extending a dispute that began in October. Medical professionals in Madrid, Catalonia and Valencia have been involved in disputes over staffing levels, workloads and the proposed reform of their employment conditions. Further stoppages are being prepared in Andalucía and Castilla-La Mancha, where doctors are scheduled to begin indefinite intermittent strike action on November 16.

A major industrial confrontation is developing in Spain's meat-processing industry. Around 126,000 workers employed across 3,000 companies are set to strike for five consecutive days, from November 9 to 13. Meat-industry workers are demanding wage increases of at least 4 percent annually, with inflation-linked adjustments, reduced working hours, improvements to leave entitlements and night-shift allowances, and stronger protections against exhausting production schedules and dangerous working conditions. They demand that negotiated wage increases cannot be absorbed into existing salary supplements.

These struggles are unfolding as Spain prepares for a nationwide stoppage on November 11 initiated following a call from tenants' organisations amid mounting opposition to soaring housing costs, evictions and declining living standards. The action is backed by CCOO and UGT which are seeking to contain the movement and channel it towards the re-election of a PSOE-led government. CCOO leader Unai Sordo declared that it was "not really a strike against the government," while UGT leader Pepe Álvarez insisted that it was "not a classic general strike."

The November 11 national stoppage must not become another isolated protest subordinated to the electoral calculations of the trade union bureaucracies and the PSOE-Sumar government. What is required is the unification of these struggles through independent, democratically elected rank-and-file committees, controlled by workers themselves and linked across workplaces, industries and national borders.

Above all, these struggles raise the necessity for an independent political movement of the working class, opposed to all the capitalist parties and based on a socialist programme. The deterioration of public services, suppression of wages and subordination of workers' safety to corporate profits are inseparable from the broader agenda of austerity, militarism and social inequality pursued by the Spanish ruling class and the European Union. The fight to defend wages, working conditions and public services must be developed into a common struggle of workers across Spain and Europe against the capitalist system.



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