

EU parliament backs Podemos campaign to jail Rubiales over women's world cup kiss

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On Thursday, the European Parliament joined in the campaign led by Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government and world media to jail former Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) chief Luis Rubiales, for kissing midfielder Jennifer Hermoso after the women's world cup final in Australia.

The furor began on August 20, after Spain's women's football (soccer) team won its first World Cup when Rubiales put his hands on either side of Hermoso's head and kissed her on the mouth. After the match, Hermoso initially said "it was the emotion of the moment, there is nothing beyond it. It will remain an anecdote. Very sure that it won't go any further." She added that she did not "like it" and that "she did not expect it."

After Rubiales insisted the kiss was consensual and Hermoso denied it, the PSOE-Podemos government used this as a the basis for a campaign to destroy Rubiales' life and career. On Sunday, Rubiales announced his resignation as the head of the Spanish football federation and the vice president of UEFA, after being accused of sexual assault and coercion by the Prosecutor's Office of the National Court.

Rubiales will now be judged by a court which tries crimes against humanity and terrorism. He faces up to four years in jail if found guilty. The judge will use the new, broadened definition of sexual assault in the penal code championed by Podemos last year that eliminated the distinction between "sexual harassment" and "sexual assault."

The EU parliament, which is playing a leading role in coordinating European participation in the NATO war with Russia in Ukraine, has now joined in the campaign against Rubiales. On Thursday, it held a debate on the issue. It was, however, less a debate than a ritualised

witch hunt by the entire parliament, from neo-fascists and conservatives to social democrats and pseudo-left legislators. This degraded spectacle exposed the fraudulence of attempts to portray the anti-Rubiales campaign as left-wing or democratic, and reveals its close ties to right-wing, pro-war elements.

Catalan Republican Left (ERC) MEP Diana Riba launched the debate, speaking for the Greens. She said Rubiales' kiss "shows how difficult it is to break with structural violence and impunity." She added, "it is only the tip of the iceberg of a discriminatory practice that had been denounced for some time."

Podemos and its new pseudo-left political front, Sumar, also joined in. MEP Idoia Villanueva, Podemos spokesperson in the EU's Committee on Foreign Affairs and a hardline advocate of sanctions against Russia, denounced the 'impunity' against which a whole "feminist wave has risen that defends that there is no sexual freedom without consent."

Polish MEP and ex-footballer Tomasz Frankowski, of the right-wing European People's Party, said Rubiales' kiss is "the image of sexual assault, seen across Europe and is a crime against sport." Frankowski is a leading proponent of calls to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from the 2024 Paris Olympic Games and football competitions.

Other right-wing or neo-fascist forces happily joined in the denunciation of Rubiales. The right-wing and neo-fascist forces also supported the condemnation of Rubiales. Rosa Estarás of Spain's right-wing Popular Party denounced Rubiales' kiss as the "tip of the iceberg" of "sexist reality", while Jorge Buxadé, of Spain's neo-fascist Vox party attacked the kiss as a "rude gesture". Buxadé went on to denounce transsexual athletes.

For the European social-democrats, former trade

union bureaucrat and Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) parliamentarian Evelyn Regner declared: “the kiss was not wanted, so it was an abuse of power through sexual assault.” She added that now, “this is over.”

Perhaps the worst hypocrisy came from Sumar spokesperson Ernest Urtasun, who aggressively advocates NATO weapons deliveries to Ukraine against Russia. After denouncing the kiss as a “despicable act [that] allowed the world to witness the uprising of the feminist world,” he hailed Spain’s female footballers for negotiating a new collective agreement on minimum salaries “after a strike that has been an example for all of Europe.”

Urtasun’s reference to encouraging strike action as an example for Europe is a disgusting political fraud. Not only the right-wing parties, but also Podemos and its social-democratic allies are violently hostile to striking workers in Spain and across Europe. The forces driving the prosecution of Rubiales have responded to the upsurge of the class struggle in the recent period by working furiously to repress it.

The PSOE-Podemos government deployed armoured vehicles and thousands of riot police who violently assaulted striking metalworkers in Cadiz. It sent 23,000 police to assault the three-week nationwide truck drivers’ strike last year. It was the largest police deployment targeting a strike in Spanish history. It has also resorted to minimum service legislation to break strikes, most recently by health workers and airline crew.

The middle class milieu of feminist political operatives attacking Rubiales and the allies they have acquired in the course of their campaign—whether explicitly right wing or nominally “left”—are pro-war, pro-austerity and anti-working class.

The new PSOE-Sumar minority government, which the ERC is in talks to support, is expected to impose brutal cuts of between €20 and €30 billion to meet its EU spending obligations. At the same time, it keeps hiking military spending to record levels and support NATO’s reckless war against nuclear-armed Russia in the Ukraine. As part of its participation in the war, Podemos has sent Spanish anti-tank weapons to the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion.

The PSOE-Podemos government also implemented a profits-over-lives policy in the COVID-19 pandemic

leading to over 160,000 deaths in Spain, and the barbaric incarceration and murder of migrants, including the massacre of at least 100 refugees at the borders of the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

While Frankowski denounces Rubiales for a kiss and campaigns against Russian and Belarussian athletes, Poland is emerging as a critical NATO military logistics hub. Poland has also sent weapons and material worth over three billion euros to Ukraine, including around 250 tanks. It has also almost doubled its own military budget, setting itself the goal of building the largest land army in Europe, with 300,000 soldiers. Poland is thus being prepared to potentially be the next country to intervene militarily against Russia.

The Austrian social-democrat Regner epitomizes the affluent middle class layers who seek to use petty bourgeois identity politics, including events like the feminist Rubiales campaign, to advance their careers and secure positions of power. For over a decade, she has agitated for more females to get positions on European corporate boards—where these women oversee the exploitation of workers of all genders and sexual orientations by the corporation.

In 2013, answering a question on about possibly requiring boards to have at least 40 percent women, Regner said: “it will be challenging, but having a board with at least 30 percent women is needed in order to change the whole way of working, the way of looking at things. ... We need a more balanced percentage of women in the whole structure of the enterprise and therefore we need qualification programmes for women.”

The hysterical campaign against Rubiales is steeped in the reactionary politics of imperialist war and austerity defended by the middle class feminist types who aspire to become corporate executives or capitalist politicians. They seek to whip up a witch hunt atmosphere to mask their own reactionary role and the mounting opposition in the working class to their reactionary capitalist agenda of austerity and imperialist war.



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