

Spain's PSOE-Sumar government cynically endorses ICJ but refuses to accuse Israel of genocide

Alejandro López
10 June 2024

Last Thursday, Spain's Foreign Minister, Jose Manuel Albares, announced that Madrid would support the case filed last December by South Africa at the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel over its genocide in Gaza. It was another stunt aiming to strangle mass opposition to the Israeli genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, without in any way deviating from Madrid's support for the genocidal Zionist regime.

"We made this decision in light of the continuation of the military operation in Gaza," Albares said, adding: "Our sole goal is to put an end to the war and to advance on the road of applying the two-state solution." A week before, Spain, along with Ireland and Norway, recognised the non-existent state of Palestine.

The "two-state solution" is a bankrupt proposal of creating a mini-Palestinian statelet that faces the hysterical opposition of the Israeli military machine, armed by all the NATO powers. Minutes after the announcement, whilst Spanish and international media claimed Madrid was backing the South African case, it was soon exposed as a farce.

Asked by journalists, Albares made clear that Spain is not adhering to the case itself — that is, that Israel is committing genocide—and is adopting a "neutral" position. "Spain does not take sides with any part of the process but is in favour of the court." He stressed "this is not against Israel" and explicitly refused to call the IDF's actions a genocide.

Thus, the PSOE-Sumar government is cynically endorsing the ICJ but declaring that it is "neutral" on the genocide. Only a week ago, the ICJ issued an emergency order under the 1948 Genocide Convention for Israel to "immediately halt its military offensive." The ICJ's ruling was issued just days after the International Criminal Court (ICC) sought arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant, accusing them of "extermination" of civilians.

Netanyahu's far-right regime has responded by accelerating its genocide. An estimated 40,000 people have

been killed, 80 percent of whom are women and children, whilst famine now affects 90 percent of the population, as 1.7 million people are compressed into less than one fifth of the Gaza Strip, under relentless bombardment. On Saturday, the IDF committed a massacre at the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing 210 Palestinians and wounded more than 400 to rescue four Israeli captives.

Madrid's positions are lies, however, because the PSOE-Sumar government has taken sides with the Zionist regime. As Albares spoke, according to the Solidarity Network Against the Occupation of Palestine (RESCOP), the Vertom Odette, a cargo ship bound for Israel loaded with weapons, arrived at the Spanish port of Cartagena. It departed a few hours later, without its cargo being inspected as pro-Palestinian activists demanded.

This is the third ship suspected of transporting weapons to Israel that stopped in Cartagena. The first was the Borkum, a ship which allegedly had 20 tons of rocket engines, 12.5 tons of rockets with explosive charge, 1,500kg of explosives and 740 kg of charges and propellants for cannon. There was also the Marianne Danica cargo ship.

Thus, the PSOE-Sumar government remains complicit in using Spanish territorial waters and ports to arm Israel.

Officially, Madrid claims to have stopped sending weapons to Israel. However, this has been exposed as a lie: reports surfaced showing that the PSOE-Sumar government sold nearly €1 million of ammunition to Israel in November. Madrid has also kept importing millions of euros worth of weaponry from Israel tagged as "tested in combat," i.e., on Palestinians. In a single contract signed in November, Spain bought Israeli Spike LR2 missiles for €287.5 million.

The PSOE-Sumar government's maneuver undoubtedly has an electoral component. It happened three days before the European elections—in which, despite the ruling classes' attempts to whip up anti-Russian hysteria, scapegoat migrants and bolster the far-right, Gaza's fate has remained a key concern of voters.

Workers and young people are horrified by Israel's violence and European complicity, and across Spain, students are occupying campuses in major cities, and rallies take place weekly.

Above all, the announcement aims to deceive workers and youth with arguments that the PSOE-Sumar government is sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians and responsive to protests. In fact, the only way to stop the war is to build an international movement in the working class, aiming to halt the arming of Israel and opposing NATO governments, including the PSOE-Sumar government in Spain.

Indeed, hours after Albares spoke, the PSOE-Sumar government sent 18 vans of anti-riot police to assault pro-Palestinian students at Complutense University of Madrid, who were peacefully blocking a road next to the campus. They shouted, "hypocritical progressive and racist government" and "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

The pseudo-left party Sumar predictably reacted with lies, claiming that Albares' announcement means Spain is formally accusing Israel of genocide. Sumar leader and deputy prime minister Yolanda Díaz tweeted: "We did it. Spain will also join South Africa's demand to pursue Israel's war crimes."

When Albares' stunt was exposed as a lie and backfired on social media, Manu Pineda, a leading Sumar candidate for the EU elections, tweeted: "Albares the trickster has deceived us again. Spain has not joined South Africa's demand." Pineda's charlatanry was already denounced by the WSWs last March when he called for pro-Palestine protests against his own government.

Podemos, the pseudo-left party that recently left the PSOE-Sumar government coalition, also cynically feigned sympathy for the Palestinians. In the European election, Podemos campaigned on Gaza, despite its pro-Zionist stance when it was in government from January 2020 to December 2023, including sending weapons to Israel and sending Spanish frigates to join the battle group of the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier to support Israel's war.

"People expected something from the Spanish government and they have returned only to look for the headline. It is false that Spain is going to support South Africa. How sad," tweeted Podemos general secretary Ione Belarra.

On Friday's debate among leading candidates, Podemos' lead candidate and former minister for gender equality Irene Montero asked the PSOE's candidate: "if we are not going to the International Court of Justice to accuse Netanyahu of genocide, why the hell are we going? Why is this government taking so long to break off trade relations and why are we not capable of doing what needs to be done to stop the genocide?" she asked. "If it is a genocide, why

don't we do anything to stop it?" she asked again.

But this is empty phrasemongering, and Podemos is covering for the PSOE-Sumar government. Having left it in December, Podemos is intervening in the mass anti-genocide protests to channel them back behind the PSOE and Sumar. It calls for the PSOE-Sumar government to impose arms embargos, sanctions on Israel and to break diplomatic relations with the country. But the PSOE and Sumar have demonstrated they are opposed to such a policy.

Stopping the mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza requires building a global movement in the working class against the capitalist class and its repressive state machine on an international, socialist basis. The decisive task facing workers and youth in Spain is developing a political revolt against the PSOE-Sumar government, its allied union bureaucracies and pseudo-left satellites like Podemos. A campaign of strikes and political struggles must link the fight against genocide in Gaza to the fight against imperialist war and capitalism.

Workers and youth cannot wait for the union bureaucracies or middle-class groups like Podemos to organise a genuine struggle against the Gaza genocide. They must mobilise themselves independently in rank-and-file committees, in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods to organize strikes, blockades and protests. Above all this means building a new revolutionary party of the Spanish working class, as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact