

Spanish workers condemned to three and a half years in prison for picketing

Santiago Guillen
8 July 2024

Spain's Supreme Court upheld the sentence of three and a half years in prison, initially imposed on six workers in 2021 by a local court, for participating in a picket in front of a bakery in the Asturian city of Gijón in northern Spain. The decision of the highest judicial body in Spain sets a reactionary precedent whereby thousands of people could be imprisoned in the future simply for protesting in a labor dispute.

The events in question occurred in 2017 when a worker at La Suiza bakery turned to the anarchist trade union, the National Confederation of Labour (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores, CNT) due to workplace harassment. This harassment included marathon workdays, unpaid overtime and vacations, and wages below the contractual agreement, in addition to reporting abuse by her boss.

The CNT reached out to the employer to negotiate a financial settlement for the dismissed worker. When he refused to negotiate, the union initiated a series of protests in front of the bakery that lasted for five months. Customer entry was never blocked, no damage was caused, and the police never had to intervene.

The employer filed complaints against up to 30 participants in these pickets and, despite the fact that they acted legally, successive courts decided to impose prison sentences on six members of the CNT, using the excuse that the bakery ended up closing due to these protests. This is another falsehood, since the business had been put up for sale a year earlier. Despite acknowledging this, the ruling blames the union activity for the closure rather than the owners' intention to sell.

This trial sought to make an example of the workers and establish a precedent, as the employer's family indicated to the press. They nakedly threatened the working class: "These events can no longer happen, as

they did to us, since there is now a precedent set by the Supreme Court that any judge in Spain can apply from the moment they receive a complaint with similar circumstances."

But there was no fair trial. This ruling exposed the corruption of the Spanish justice system and its direct cooperation with the bourgeoisie and fascistic forces. According to media reports, the person responsible for the complaint and who designed the legal strategy was Pablo Álvarez Meana, the son of the bakery owner.

A former member of New Generations (Nuevas Generaciones), the youth wing of the right-wing Popular Party, Meana is a well-known fascist. He has publicly praised figures such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, currently carrying out a genocide against Palestinians in Gaza with the backing of the US and other NATO powers; Giorgia Meloni of the Brothers of Italy (FdI) party, the political successor of the Fascist Party of World War II-era dictator Benito Mussolini; Argentina's fascistic President Javier Milei; and the leader of the French neo-fascist National Rally (RN), Marine Le Pen.

An expert in "Security and International Politics," Maena frequently travels to Buenos Aires, where he advises Patricia Bullrich, minister of security under Javier Milei. After winning the trial, he congratulated his lawyer with a tweet expressing his class hatred, saying, "We did it!! FINAL CONVICTION for the anarchist CNT prisoners."

The lawyer of the bakery is Javier Gómez Bermúdez, a former judge of the National Court, a special Spanish tribunal dedicated to cases of terrorism and drug trafficking. He became famous for establishing the legal doctrine that prevented Emilio Botín, then president of Banco Santander, Spain's largest bank, from being convicted of tax fraud. He later left the

National Court to practice law, and his wealthy clients now include Banco Santander itself and Jaime Botín, Emilio's brother and uncle of the current president of the bank.

The judge who sentenced the CNT members, Lino Rubio Mayo, is notorious for his harsh anti-working-class rulings in labor conflicts and social disputes.

The judge who upheld the sentence in the Supreme Court is Manuel Marchena, another prominent figure known for leading the sham trial of Catalan nationalist leaders, which condemned nine of them to decade-long jail sentences over their role in the October 1, 2017, Catalan independence referendum. The ruling was based on fraudulent convictions on charges of sedition and misuse of public funds.

The role of these fascistic individuals in the conviction of labor picketers is an urgent warning on how fascistic police-state measures have escalated, first under the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government (2020-2023) and then the current PSOE-Sumar government.

Capitalist governments in Spain and internationally are preparing the state machine to attack any protests against imperialist wars such as the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the NATO-backed Palestinian genocide in Gaza, as well as against austerity at home. The leaders of Podemos and Sumar have not sought to oppose the capitalist state and its repressive apparatus but to integrate into its military-police machinery. Their minor declarations of support for the convicted workers are empty and cynical.

The PSOE-Podemos government has been violently hostile to working class struggles. In November 2021, it deployed armoured vehicles and riot police against striking metalworkers in Cadiz. In April 2022, it mobilised 23,000 police to crush a 75,000-strong truckers strike against rising fuel prices amid NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine. Against healthcare workers and aircrew strikes, the PSOE-Podemos used the draconian minimum service requirements to break strikes.

Sumar's former leader, current Deputy Prime Minister and Labour Minister Yolanza Díaz, imposed a reactionary anti-worker labor law that enshrined precarious working conditions and a pension cut fixing the retirement age at 67 and slashing future retiree benefits. Austerity policies have continued under the

current PSOE-Sumar government.

The union bureaucracies have also verbally supported these workers, but the reality is that beyond sending a few union bureaucrats to join solidarity protests, the Podemos/Sumar-linked Workers Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, CCOO) and the PSOE-aligned General Union of Workers (UGT) have not organised any mass protests or sought to rally their 2 million members to oppose this sentence or others like it.

The way forward for Spanish workers to respond to repression and defend their living conditions, just like their counterparts in Europe and around the world, does not lie in trusting the pseudo-left forces or the union bureaucracies. Instead, they should form independent grassroots committees in each workplace and coordinate and unify their struggles through the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Building such committees is the only way to break the overwhelming control of the PSOE government, along with Podemos and Sumar, and the union leaders over the class struggle.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)