

Report exposes PSOE-Podemos government's role in Melilla migrant massacre in Spain

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Two years after over 100 people were killed trying to reach Spain at the border fence with Morocco at Melilla, a comprehensive investigation by the Center for the Defense of Human Rights Irídia, Border Forensics and the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) has established the involvement of both the Moroccan and Spanish governments. At that time, the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the pseudo-left Podemos party ruled over Spain. Both of these parties denied any responsibility for these events for two years.

According to the report, on June 24, 2022, around 2,000 migrants, including from Chad, Niger, Sudan and South Sudan, who should have had access to asylum under international law, were surrounded by Moroccan security forces deployed the previous day. These forces pushed them towards the Spanish border crossing at a Melilla neighborhood called Barrio Chino, using infiltrators among the migrants.

Once they arrived at the crossing, they were stopped by the Spanish Civil Guard, who were waiting for them. Spanish and Moroccan police forces then attacked them from all sides using riot control weapons, including tear gas.

One of the investigators for the report, Maite Daniela Lo Coco, told the online newspaper *Público*: “The intensive use of gas in an enclosed space, along with the resulting climate of panic, undoubtedly caused the first deaths during the massacre.” The migrants were then brutally beaten by both security forces, and those who managed to cross the border were forcibly returned to Morocco.

The investigator noted that Morocco and Spain blamed the migrants for their own deaths, claiming that “the fatalities occurred due to a stampede among the migrants, without mentioning the use of riot control equipment that was deployed in a courtyard, blocking any escape route and thus creating a death trap.” Lo Coco explained that the report questions the claim that Spanish security forces

were unaware of what was happening on the other side of the fence.

The damning report confirms the WSWWS perspective of June 29, 2022, days after the massacre, which asserted:

“The massacre was clearly coordinated by both countries, as the Civil Guard allowed Moroccan security forces into Melilla to illegally drive refugees who made it across the border back to Morocco. In the manner of a fascist demagogue, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, the leader of the Socialist Party, declared his full support for the actions of the border guards, stating that they beat back a ‘violent assault’ and an ‘attack on the territorial integrity’ of Spain.”

Despite all the evidence, the Spanish government continues to deny any responsibility for this horrific crime. Interior Minister Grande Marlaska made no statement and asserted that he would refer to the official investigation, which he claimed “concluded and determined that there was no responsibility on the part of any authority.”

This stance is still upheld by PSOE and Podemos. After the massacre, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez equated malnourished and frightened migrants with an army, saying: “It was a violent attack on our country’s borders, they were armed,” and maintained that the Spanish government “has always been proportional in responding to migration crises.”

The pseudo-left Podemos party also adopted the criminal policy of excusing the massacre. Two days after the massacre, at a government press conference, the Minister of Equality and leader of Podemos, Irene Montero, cowardly agreed with the PSOE to keep silent

about the massacre. Asked five times by journalists on Podemos' stance on the massacre, she remained completely mute, as the spokeswoman of the government, Isabel Rodríguez, answered in her name. Government sources told *El Confidencial* that Montero's silence was agreed between Podemos and Sánchez.

After mass outrage, she then stated that they were "unbearable events" and called for an "independent investigation." However, this investigation was never conducted. In December, Podemos agreed with the PSOE not to request such a commission and even refrained from censuring the interior minister.

The statements put the PSOE-Podemos government in line with policies that previously would have been unthinkable except under far-right regimes.

It is yet another demonstration of how deeply Podemos leaders have integrated into the police apparatus of Spanish imperialism. As *El País* admitted after Podemos rejected an inquiry: "Podemos has promoted similar requests for a commission twice in the past ... and now, in this context of noise and controversy on several fronts and ministries of the coalition, it is clear that 'they are part of a government' and, therefore, do not want to call for resignations or disapproval of ministers."

But the true plans of the Spanish government and the strategic objective of this massacre became evident days later at the NATO summit held in Madrid. The government succeeded in lobbying NATO to consider border crossings as a "hybrid threat" similar to terrorism. This raises the question of whether the massacre was orchestrated to justify the PSOE-Podemos inclusion of migration as a "hybrid threat" in NATO strategy documents.

When this massacre occurred, the PSOE and Podemos were allowing the arrival of thousands of Ukrainian refugees fleeing NATO's war in Ukraine against Russia. The Melilla massacre exposes that was not an act of solidarity with refugees, but part of NATO's strategy to promote imperialist war.

Imperialist war and violence against migrants are inseparable from repression against workers at home. Months later, both parties directed the police violence used in Melilla against workers at home, deploying thousands of police officers to suppress major strikes by truckers and the metal sector in Cádiz.

Last week, the right-wing Popular Party demanded that Spain deploy the army to stop migrants from coming to Spain. Its spokesperson in parliament, Miguel Tellado, said, "We ask the Spanish Government to do its job and

stop once and for all this massive arrival of immigrants to our borders illegally and through mafias that are endangering the lives of these people."

Minister for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration Elma Saiz cynically reacted by declaring the PP's demand "absolutely condemnable" and demanded an "immediate rectification from the PP." They "not only embrace the theses of Vox but are going much further than the statements of ultra-right governments that we have also seen in Europe."

The fact is in May 2021, over a year before the Melilla Massacre, the PSOE-Podemos government, backed by the European Union, reacted to desperate migrants crossing from Morocco into Spain by deploying the army and special forces. This was the first time the army was deployed against refugees. Spain then sent hundreds of unaccompanied child migrants back to Morocco in flagrant violation of international law.

As the WWSWS noted at the time, the Melilla massacre underscores the brutality and disregard of basic democratic rights that pervade the EU. It now backs arming the Israeli regime's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and its advanced preparations for war with Lebanon. It is part of the resurrection across Europe of forms of state-organised violence and political reaction not seen since Europe was ruled by fascist regimes during the 1930s.

The massacre and its aftermath is also a warning. As workers enter into struggle against inflation, austerity, militarism and attacks on democratic rights, they face in the PSOE, Podemos and Sumar determined enemies of the working class, ready and willing to use deadly force against workers and youth. Against the threat of savage repression at home and war abroad, the *World Socialist Web Site* calls for the building of an international workers' movement against war that defends democratic rights through the struggle for socialism.



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