

Argentine pseudo-lefts join forces with Milei in #MeToo campaign against former President Alberto Fernández

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Amid a historic economic and political crisis, the Argentine media has been dominated for more than a week by allegations of domestic abuse by Peronist ex-President Alberto Fernández.

On Monday, his former partner Fabiola Yañez visited the Argentine consulate in Madrid to present felony charges of “gender violence” against Fernández, which could result in a jail term of up to two years. She claims that Fernandez assaulted her physically and also perpetrated psychological abuse and harassment for several years. She had initially filed misdemeanor charges on August 6, which had immediately resulted in a court order for Fernández not to approach or contact Yañez or leave Argentina.

The case was not initiated by Yañez. Judge Julián Ercolini had approached Yañez in early July after uncovering text messages and photos in the phone of Fernandez’s secretary pointing to domestic violence against Yañez. At the time, the judge was pursuing a separate corruption investigation related to the alleged embezzlement of government insurance payments.

In an exclusive interview with *Infobae*, the former first lady explained that in early July, “I get a call from the judge. He wanted to do everything fast. Everything in a hurry. In less than four hours they set up a hearing for me.”

She first refused to press charges but changed her mind and filed a case under the same judge, Ercolini, last week. On Thursday, two days later, the text messages and photos of alleged bruises were leaked to the media.

Fernández has denied the allegations, indicating that he will prove his innocence in court and suggesting that his former partner was “incentivized by someone.” In the week since, he has remained confined in his apartment due to threats of lynching. Setting a dangerous precedent, he has already lost his position at the University of Buenos Aires, where he had taught law for four decades.

Simultaneously, a barrage of videos and news stories have appeared suggesting that he had been unfaithful before separating officially from his wife when his term ended last December.

Before any investigation or impartial review of evidence, including possibly a digital forensic examination of texts and photographs, Argentina’s corporate media has mounted a reactionary campaign to declare Fernández guilty before any trial.

While there are numerous well-established reasons to condemn Fernández on political grounds, including the mass suffering and death from his administration’s negligent response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of IMF austerity diktats, the current campaign centered on charges of domestic violence can only serve reactionary ends.

The Peronist leadership, including his former allies, are already using it as a distraction from drawing political lessons from the treacherous role played by Peronism. Most perniciously, fascist President Javier Milei

and the far-right in general are using the scandal to whip up a climate of mob justice and irrational hatred.

Milei immediately jumped on the opportunity to declare *ex cathedra*, “the solution to the violence perpetrated by psychopaths against women is not to create a Ministry of Women, it is not to hire miles of unnecessary public employees. ... The only solution to reduce crime is to be tough on those who commit it.”

As his administration seeks to impose the most brutal shock therapy of privatizations and austerity in the country’s history, Milei is moving to outlaw all forms of social opposition, including street protests and strikes, and set the stage for open dictatorship.

In this context, the need to defend the right of the leader of a political opposition party to a hearing before any condemnation should be self-evident.

More broadly, while the unpopular former president is the convenient target today, the poor and oppressed have always become the main victims of attacks against the presumption of innocence.

This danger for workers is demonstrated by the fact that Milei upholds the legacy of the military dictatorship under Gen. Rafael Videla, whose regime of terror encouraged, including through intimidation and newspaper ads, denunciations against “subversives,” which led to millions of police files with claims that included belonging to a left-wing group or simply being disrespectful to the nation, the military or Catholicism. This resulted in tens of thousands of workers and youth being killed, arrested, tortured or laid off.

During the past week, not a single sober assessment of the political motives and timing of the case has appeared in the media. Any such commentary would necessarily point out the reactionary political and economic circles behind Judge Ercolini, including his ties to Milei.

As president, Fernández had asked the Ministry of Justice to bring criminal charges against Judge Ercolini and other federal judges, former intelligence agents and managers of the daily newspaper *Clarín* for participating in a trip to the home of British billionaire Joe Lewis in Rio Negro, where discussions presumably took place related to regulations and legal cases against the magnate’s real estate operations, which include his illegally blocking public access to Escondido Lake. Lewis is a close friend of former President Mauricio Macri, who provided the main political and economic capital for Milei’s presidential campaign. Among Milei’s first acts as president was the elimination of regulations on the extent of land that foreign nationals can own, directly benefitting Lewis.

Judge Ercolini has rejected calls by the defense to recuse himself from leading the corruption case against Fernández.

Despite this public information, the entire political establishment has fallen in line behind the right-wing uproar.

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the political leader of Peronism and

vice president under Alberto Fernández (unrelated), declared that the photos of bruises “not only show the beating inflicted, but also reveal the darkest and most sordid aspects of the human condition.”

A majority of the Peronist members of the House of Deputies voted for an official statement concluding: “We must reaffirm our political conviction that in these cases we always believe the victim.”

While making muffled complaints about the far-right’s previous opposition to talk of “gender violence,” the pseudo-left organizations of the middle class have taken front stage in the witch-hunt.

On Monday, Gabriel Solano, the president of Partido Obrero, which belongs to the so-called Left and Workers Front (FIT-U), published a rabid McCarthyite piece for *Infobae*. It is worth pointing out that *Infobae*, the most widely read Spanish-language media outlet in the world, is openly pro-Milei and has led the witch-hunt, being the first to leak the photos and texts from the case and hosting the only interview Yañez has granted.

Solano starts: “If there was anything missing to expose the rottenness of the current political regime, it was the irrefutable denunciation of the violence exercised by former President Alberto Fernandez against his former wife. The photos of Fabiola Yañez with her black eye and her arms with bruises will remain impregnated in the retina of the people for many years to come.”

He then lists a series of sexual scandals against other Peronist politicians, concluding that Peronism is “a rotten political force that uses state resources to commit outrages against women and then cover them up. On the list should be noted, among other things, complicity with trafficking networks and the capitalist business of prostitution, which also includes children.”

It is a statement of utter political bankruptcy that these organizations, which long ago abandoned the fight for Trotskyism in the working class, are actively joining efforts to degrade the democratic consciousness and the political and legal life of the country to the level of sex scandals, a staple of the most reactionary, anti-democratic forces. Such activities can only have the most destructive effect on the political and class consciousness of the working class.

These pseudo-left forces are consciously blocking the public from drawing any conclusions about the political forces behind this witch-hunt. Celeste Murillo of the Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (PTS), also of the FIT-U, acknowledged on the radio program “Circulo Rojo” that the far-right has previously exploited “gender violence” allegations “to justify the criminalization of groups of people,” like migrants, but claimed that this is not a danger today.

Murillo offered no explanation as to how the campaign to declare the former president an abuser of women before a trial will not facilitate the use of sexual scandals against minorities or other political opponents at a time when the likes of Trump in the US, Alternative for Germany, Vox in Spain and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni portray all migrants as rapists and sexual abusers.

Anticipating such a criticism, Murillo then denounces as an attempt to “silence” feminists any arguments that “with these criticisms you are playing into the hands of the right wing, you are being functional to the reactionaries.”

Another sordid effort to conceal the dangerous political consequences of this witch-hunt was made by Jorge Altamira, the founder of the Partido Obrero and leader today of *Politica Obrera*. In a radio program Sunday, he declared, “The gender phenomenon and the female phenomenon should not be minimized.”

After comparing Fernández to Rasputin as a “character that only thrives in a picture of decomposition,” Altamira said that it does not matter whether or not the allegations of domestic abuse are a “political operation” and said, “I don’t have the time and it’s not my focus” to find out what actually took place.

The interviewer then asked about several precedents that are worth reviewing. First he raised the case of President Juan Domingo Perón and Nelly Rivas, which actually highlights the dangers in the Fernandez case. In response, Altamira said, “There you also have a case of gender violence that was functional and it was also in the Presidential Palace, what a coincidence, what a coincidence.”

Here, Altamira is embracing yet another smear campaign, the charges that Perón had sexual relations with 14-year-old Nelly Rivas (which Perón denied and were never subjected to a trial) after the death of his wife Eva Perón. The claims were used to justify his military overthrow in 1955 by a far-right faction of the military, including neo-Nazis, and to criminalize Peronism and the trade unions.

Then, the interviewer brought up “the case of Bill Clinton,” adding that “a minor event buried him politically.” Altamira simply refused to even consider the parallels and the dangers today.

In 1998-99, far-right Republicans financed and directed two legal cases against then President Bill Clinton to spur a sexual scandal in an attempt to depose him, including allegations of sexual harassment against an employee and of mismanagement of a failed real estate investment. Clinton was tricked into lying under oath to deny an affair that the far-right prosecutors led by Kenneth Starr uncovered, leading to an impeachment trial that finally failed to oust the twice-elected president.

While opposing the imperialist Clinton administration, the WSWS warned that the success of a palace coup would “represent a major step towards dictatorship in the United States” and called on workers to oppose the impeachment campaign. The case set the stage for the stolen election in 2000 and the accelerated degeneration of all vestiges of democracy in America since.

The advent of the #MeToo movement in the US came in the wake of Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential election. As the WSWS noted in 2020, the Democratic Party establishment and its left satellites “needed to distract attention from their electoral fiasco, regroup and galvanize their shocked and demoralized middle class supporters and direct them along right-wing, identity politics lines. This was never about the rights and conditions of working women.”

A similar process is unfolding today in Argentina in the wake of Milei’s election. The support for the witch-hunt against Fernandez by the pseudo-left demonstrates that these organizations speak for social layers of the affluent middle class, who have no response to the threat of fascism other than to draw closer and appeal to the far-right and the capitalist state as useful allies against the working class. There is nothing democratic, progressive or, much less, socialist about these political groups.

The fears of the layers they represent, who belong to the richest roughly 10 percent of society, are sparked chiefly not by the far-right, but by a revolutionary challenge from below at a time when the bottom 90 percent have suffered a historic and ongoing attack against their living standards and social rights.



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