

Lisbon rocked by a week of anti-police protests after fatal shooting

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Early Monday morning, a police officer shot and killed Odair Moniz, a 43 year old chef, in the Amadora area of Lisbon. Each night since then protesters, have clashed with police in the Portuguese capital. Thursday morning, police announced that they had arrested several people in connection with the burning of two buses and one police car. This is the first fatal police shooting in Lisbon since 2009 and comes amid growing right-wing anti-immigrant agitation among Portuguese politicians.

Police initially claimed Moniz resisted arrest and threatened them with a knife, but that was quickly proven to be a lie. By Tuesday, the Judicial Police had announced that Moniz was unarmed, and the officer who shot Moniz stated that he was never threatened with a knife.

According to the official account, police tried to pull over Moniz in the early morning for an undisclosed reason when he drove away. After a brief pursuit, he crashed; shortly after he left the car an officer fired a warning shot into the air before shooting Moniz in the armpit and abdomen. Video from a witness has emerged of the aftermath of the shooting, before Moniz was taken to the hospital where he died of his wounds. The officer who shot Moniz faces judicial and disciplinary investigations.

Since the shooting, several of Lisbon's poorer neighborhoods have erupted in protest and been met with police crackdowns. On Tuesday, neighbors and family of Moniz reported that masked police officers broke into the home of his widow in the Zambujal neighborhood, striking several relatives. The police agency (PSP) categorically denied entering the home but provided no other explanation for the broken door or witness testimony.

Today, a protest against police violence called by

Vida Justa will be met by a counter protest called by the fascist Chega party. Many police officers sympathize with Chega, and Chega has wasted no time glorifying the police killing of an unarmed man.

The head of Chega's parliamentary group Pedro Pinto said on Wednesday that "if the police shot to kill more often, the country would be in better order." Ricardo Reis, the leader of Chega's youth wing, brazenly applauded the police murder of Moniz in a tweet that he has since deleted, which said: "One less criminal ... One less Left Bloc voter."

Moniz was an immigrant from the former Portuguese colony of Cabo Verde who had been in the country for 20 years. He was married with three children and ran a small cafe. His execution at the hands of a police officer can only be understood in the context of the broader anti-immigrant agitation that has been building in official Portuguese and European politics.

Since the March elections, Portugal has had a minority government led by the right-wing Social Democratic Party (PSD), with the big-business Socialist Party (PS) and its allies in opposition, and the fascistic Chega a substantial third party. The PSD has been courting Chega, in particular by embracing attacks on immigrants.

In June, the government removed the ability for foreigners who found work while already in Portugal to apply for residency. Instead, they are required to leave the country and apply for a work permit before returning. These changes primarily target migrant farm labor. In an attempt to justify his anti-migrant policy, Deputy Minister Rui Armindo Freitas claimed it would prevent Chega from "hijacking" the issue. That is to say that, on the pretext of opposing Chega, the PSD implements Chega's policies.

The same basic trend can be seen across Europe and

the United States: far-right anti-immigrant agitation by the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, Rassemblement National in France, or the Republican Party in the US has been embraced by all the major capitalist parties. This has taken its grim toll in the deaths of tens of thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean and the barbaric treatment of immigrants, and particularly children, at the US-Mexican border.

The PS has denounced protests against the police murder of Moniz, with PS leader Pedro Nuno Santos claiming that they deserved his “condemnation.” While he admitted that revolt could be “legitimate,” he demanded that it take place strictly within the framework of the law. He blamed the police murder not on the police, but on generalized racism which he ascribed not to the police, but to Portuguese society as a whole.

Acting as if it was not clear that police shot and killed Moniz, Santos said: “We cannot ignore that there is racism, there is police violence, so we must all be prudent and avoid drawing hasty conclusions one can draw about an affair we do not fully know. There are inquiries, there is an ongoing investigation. We must wait calmly in order not to take a risk of being unfair towards the memory of the dead, and towards the agent of the police force.”

Indeed, the PS is so right-wing that the incoming PSD government has been able to largely take over the previous PS government’s reactionary agenda. This included austerity against workers at home to fund record military funding for NATO’s war in Ukraine, as well as political support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

For their part, the Pabloite Bloco Esquerda’s (BE) and Stalinist Communist Party of Portugal (PCP), which saw their votes collapse in the last election have been clinging to the PS. These reactionary parties of the affluent middle class hope to reprise their role in the former *Geringonça* coalition where they helped the PS government implement austerity.

About Moriz’s murder, BE parliamentary leader Fabian Figueiredo asked the interior minister a series of obsequious questions while lamely requesting an investigation. “If confirmed, these facts are extremely serious and flagrantly violate the most basic rights of citizens, the rule of law and society’s trust in the security forces.” Even as a worker not charged with any

crime lay dead, Figueiredo euphemistically declared: “we may be facing a police operation that did not comply with the law and was, therefore, illegal, disproportionate and unnecessary.”

But workers should not trust security forces that murder innocent people in the service of capitalist ruling elites that are rehabilitating far-right parties. BE is deeply concerned about “society’s trust in the security forces,” not because the security forces are trustworthy, but because throughout their coalition with the PS, BE relied on the police-state apparatus to break up any movement of workers against their own austerity policies. Most notably in 2019, both it backed Portugal’s PS government as it mobilized the army to break a nationwide truck drivers strike.

Police murders and the rapid shift of the European political establishment to the right, particularly in its persecution of migrants, cannot be stopped based on the bankrupt, mealy-mouthed policies of BE. A movement must be built, mobilizing rank-and-file workers in Portugal and across Europe against imperialist war, fascism and police-state violence, based on a socialist perspective.



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