

## Spain Briefing: October and November 2023

*Reporting period: 1st October – 30th November 2023*

### National Developments

Spain's Sanchez secures another term as Prime Minister, ending four-month deadlock.

- On November 15th, after a four-month political deadlock following inconclusive general elections in July and two failed investiture attempts from right-wing opposition leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo from the Popular Party (PP<sup>1</sup>), [Pedro Sánchez, who helms the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party \(PSOE<sup>2</sup>\)](#), won 179 votes in favor, with 171 against and no abstentions, forming Government with left wing party SUMAR<sup>3</sup>.

### Incidents:

- [16 members of the neo-Nazi group Combat 18](#) have been arrested as part of a police operation.

The Mossos d'Esquadra and the National Police keep the investigation open after having searched 14 homes in Catalonia, Madrid, Lugo, Málaga and Toledo.

### Al Aqsa Flood and war on Gaza

Spanish state reaction to Al Aqsa Flood operation increases reaction gap between the State and the broader civil society.

- The reactions to the war on Palestine by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, have seen a shift since the beginning. On October 14<sup>th</sup> [he stated](#): "Spain is a lover of peace. That is why we condemn, emphatically and without any ambiguity, the terrorist attack by Hamas in Israel and the deaths of Israelis. We demand the urgent release of the hostages and with the same forcefulness we defend that Israel has the right to

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<sup>1</sup> PP is the Popular Party of Spain. It is currently in the opposition, and it is a right-wing conservative party.

<sup>2</sup> PSOE is the Socialist Workers' Party of Spain. The center-left party is currently head of the ruling coalition government of Spain.

<sup>3</sup> SUMAR: Sumar (in English "Unite" or "Add up") is a left-wing to far-left electoral platform—constituted as an instrumental political party for the 2023 Spanish general election. SUMAR is currently part of the ruling coalition government of Spain.

defend itself.”

By the end of November, he visited the Middle East [to negotiate peace and to announce Spain's purpose to officially recognise Palestine](#) and push for the “two state solution”. At the same time of these declarations, it emerged that [the Ministry of Defense finalised the contract for 1,680 Spike LR2 missiles for almost 290 million euros to the company Pap Tecnos](#), a subsidiary of an Israeli arms manufacturer.

- Former Spanish Social Rights Minister and head of the left wing Podemos<sup>4</sup> party Ione Belarra has [repeatedly and publicly accused Israel](#) of committing genocide in Gaza. On November 21<sup>st</sup>, [Belarra was removed from the Government](#).
- The extreme right VOX<sup>5</sup> party, uses the ongoing genocide to propose [an initiative that Congress must vote on](#) to “urge the Government to suspend the processing of files for the acquisition of Spanish nationality, authorizations for stay and residence, and prohibit the entry of immigrants from countries of Islamic culture, as long as their integration can be ensured”.
- Madrid’s right wing governing coalition formed by PP and Vox responds to the numerous and constant pro Palestine demonstrations and marches in the capital by [granting Israel its municipal Medal of Honor](#).

## Catalonian police and Ministry of Interior increase raids alongside profiling and scaremongering in light of Al Aqsa Flood

- Strategic shifts by [Catalonian police \(Mossos\) have seen a more ‘proactive’ counter-terror approach](#), especially since the Al Aqsa Flood operation of 7th October.
- Amongst these changes, is an important rise in ethnic profiling: “In recent weeks more than 33,800 people have been identified within the framework of surveillance in points of high sensitivity due to the risk of attack, especially in the city of Barcelona.”

The head of the force has also reinforced the call to agents who work on the street to reinforce their self-protection, stating that “one of the manifest objectives of jihadist groups are the police forces themselves.”

- While many Governments are trying to protect Jewish as well as Muslim communities, in Spain, [the Ministry of Interior moved to secure synagogues and Jewish schools following Hamas’ supposed calls for “global jihad”](#).

This included monitoring undertaken by anti-terrorist units, and the monitoring of slogans spread on the internet, in order to predict and intercept possible attacks on Jewish communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Podemos: Podemos (in English “we can”) left wing political party in Spain. Podemos, as part of the SUMAR platform is part of the ruling coalition government of Spain - though is not represented in any ministerial posts this time.

<sup>5</sup> VOX: Vox is a far-right national conservative political party in the opposition.

- 'Anti-jihadist' investigations have increased sharply since the onset of the [war on Gaza, with 31 arrested in one month](#).

Most of the daily news on these arrests talk about "proselytizing on networks" and in some of the cases, [the detained are being deported through the Immigration Law](#) without due process.

- On October 26th, the Catalanian police organised a simulated terrorist attack in the Sants Station of Barcelona, involving around 500 people. [The recorded and published simulation was filled with numerous calls of "Allahu Akbar"](#).
- [Europol and TikTok carried out a drill](#) at the initiative of Spain to detect terrorist content.

## Islamophobia

New cases expose how hate crimes legislation is worthless for Muslims in Spain, considering Islamophobia is still not recognised

- [Fourteen neo-Nazis have admitted that they attacked a Barcelona Mosque](#), yet have evaded jail sentences".  
[This group had caused harm](#) during its attacks, due to its two-year duration (2017-2019) and its many repercussions, not only for the Muslim community at a national level, but for the entire Nou Barris neighborhood in which the mosque was situated.
- [The jury in the trial of the 2021 murder of Moroccan Younes Bilal](#) has ruled out "racist motivation" from the killer's sentence.

This is despite the killer having shouted "I don't want moors". All the indicators were there to apply the racist aggravating circumstance.

## Incidents:

- In mid-November, [about 170,000 people marched through Madrid in the largest protest yet against an amnesty law](#) which Spain's Socialists agreed over Catalonia's 2017 separatist bid to form a government.

Amongst the Islamophobic chants of the demonstrators included the following: "With the moors, you don't have the \*\*", "Spain is Christian, not Muslim", "Next time, let Mohamed vote for you", "Don't hit me, my name is Mohamed" and so on.