

PROXY OBSERVER

SEÑALAMOS A LOS CULPABLES DE LA VIOLENCIA

REPORT: Marching for Medicine in Madrid - Je Suis Sovaldi

Report prepared for:

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Reference: *La Marcha a la Moncloa* #MachaAMoncloa

INTRODUCTION:

The first of Spain's large scale social protests for the year 2015, brought together thousands of ordinary people in Madrid demanding medical treatment for those afflicted with Hepatitis C.

This was no marketing campaign to raise funds or public awareness for a disease with no cure, hepatitis C has a cure. But the treatment, known as *Sovaldi*, is not being made available to patients.

The protest in Madrid was about saving people's lives, as opposed to saving money, which appears to be the main priority of the Spanish government. Whatever the cost of the medicine, it is certainly a lot cheaper than a human life.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROTEST:

The fatality figures from Hepatitis C speak for themselves. Every day in Spain 12 people die needlessly from this disease, a total of 4,000 in 2013. The group which organised this protest, has seen SIX of their members die from Hepatitis C since first taking to the streets.

Behind it all, is corporate greed and a government made prisoner by its own double standards. Ultimately, Spain's government represents big business and pharmaceutical companies, and those paying the price are the ones who made them Ministers.

With a weak Spanish government too scared to stand up to *Gilead* (the makers of *Sovaldi*) it is the patients themselves and their families who are now putting on the pressure, and the government is watching on.

THE ORGANISERS:

As the biggest protest so far this year, and the only one in history to reach the Presidential Palace (*Moncloa Palace*), the list of participants in the **#MarchasAMoncloa** is almost endless, but the event itself was organised by @PLAFHC. The following organisations also took part in the march:

@Marchas22M @Equo @Coordinadora25S @ahorapodemos @solfonica
@ComisionVerdad_ @yayoflautas @UPyD @CCOO @iunida
@democraciareal @CocaColaFuenla @psmadrid and of course,
@proxy_observer

Other participants who contributed to the **#MarchasAMoncloa** included Spanish Republican groups, an LGBT group, and possibly other smaller groups which we did not see ourselves.

LOCATION & DATE OF PROTEST:

The protest was scheduled for the **10th of January 2015**, and was classified as “a march” meaning it had a long route from one point of the city to another. The starting point (at 10:00) was an area called *Legazpi*. As previously stated the march finished in *Moncloa* (at 15:00).

THE EVENT:

This event was characterised by three factors: It was the biggest protest to be seen in Madrid for many months (the lowest estimate was 15,000 the highest 500,000). It had one of the longest routes of any protest we have seen (5 hours from start to finish). It had the biggest police presence for a long time.

Unlike other political marches, this event was a clever fusion of politics, art, music and culture. Throughout the long route there were poetry readings, musical sing-alongs (provided by *Solfónica*) and much needed pit stops.

Those taking part included parents with small children, pensioners, young people and Hepatitis C patients who wore red shirts with a distinctive logo. The mood was relaxed throughout the march, until we reached *Moncloa*.

MOMENTS OF PROVOCATION AND TENSION

Once in *Moncloa*, Spanish police did what they always do, which is to create unnecessary chaos and tension. Confusion reigned when the route was suddenly blocked on all roads by police vans.

As nerves began rising, a group of *antidisturbios* (UIP) approached the head of the march and proposed that 200 people continue walking towards *Moncloa Palace*, while the rest remain behind.

The UIP cordon opened a gap between two police vans and began allowing people to walk through unhindered. So far so good, until we reached the second police cordon when we were suddenly stopped and the police aggressions began.

Trapped between two police cordons, with the view almost totally obscured from the cameras by police vans, the UIP began picking out individual people, apparently *not* at random (including proxy observer) and pushed us back physically by thumping us on the chest.

It appears to us that these latest police aggressions were very much intentional, and not merely the result of a breakdown in communication. When we asked for an explanation, we were told that the instructions had suddenly and conveniently changed. Now “*only people with red shirts*” could pass through.

Once again, as a result of police incompetence, tensions rose and the UIP came close to losing control of the situation. Angry shouting between protestors and hostile *antidisturbios* started, with threats of arrests, insults and a total lack of respect towards senior citizens.

Identifying the UIP officers involved in this disgraceful episode is almost impossible, as most were not wearing their obligatory ID numbers. Proxy Observer did however manage to note down the number of one officer involved in these verbal and physical aggressions. Police Officer number 111255.

POLICE PRESENCE:

Protest organisers have come to expect breakdowns in police discipline during protests, and are well adept at handling any situation. Spanish police on the other hand, rarely learn from their mistakes.

Once again, a large percentage of UIP officers blatantly disregarded the laws which require them to correctly identify themselves when on duty. The seriousness of this bad attitude should not be underestimated. Every police officer without an ID number, represents a citizen without rights.

POLICE BLACK LISTS

This year (2015) marks a new low for Spanish democracy. The government is introducing a new gag law (*Ley Mordaza*) which formally legalises police “black lists” of enemies of the state.

These lists have existed since Franco’s time, many compiled illegally by Spain’s secret services, the difference now is that they will become legal, so the police no longer have to hide what they are doing.

During the protest, police openly filmed and photographed protestors, even though they were committing no crime. All these recordings and photographs, will no doubt end up on a police black list.

We have included photographic proof in this report of UIP police officers taking photographs of protestors along the route. We feel that the issue of police black lists is an important one, and will continue to inform the OSCE in future reports.

THE AUTHORITIES

Spain's authoritarian government relies on political and judicial repression to deal with dissent from citizens. The first step is to criminalise activists, even when their activities are perfectly legal.

It is now clear that the process of criminalising Hepatitis C patients has already begun, [as this video](#) taken in Navarra demonstrates. The video was taken at a separate HepC protest in Navarra on the same day as the protest in Madrid.

The video shows two hepatitis C patients being manhandled by police for refusing to leave without the medicine prescribed by their doctors, but which the government has blocked.

The government now faces legal action from both patients and the opposing *Socialist Party* (PSOE). The regime in Madrid has responded by accusing those dying from the disease of "*playing politics*".

The profiles of those participating in the protest are certainly not those of political activists. They were ordinary Spanish citizens who have been forced out into the streets because the stakes for not doing so are too high.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS:

Our conclusion from having observed this protest, is that Spanish authorities are attempting to criminalise HepC patients for actively pressuring the government on this issue. Madrid appears to regard only those who stay silently at home as "good citizens", but that is not an option for people who are ill.

While this protest concluded without arrests or injuries, future protests could end very differently, if the process of criminalisation and politicisation of this issue continues and the court cases fail.

The worrying signs of future government repression in the form of police "black lists" and the identification of activists, could harden attitudes on both sides. Not an ideal state of affairs with the imminent introduction of the gag law.

Hepatitis C patients believe the stumbling block is not a financial one, but rather an ideological one. Certainly, when we consider the cost involved in policing large scale protests their arguments hold water.

The financial burden of paying hundreds of police officers to provide “security” for protestors, outstrips the cost of paying for the medicine which the government insist is too expensive.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the OSCE monitor the situation closely, looking for signs of a breakdown in fundamental rights in Spain.

We further recommend the OSCE offers guidance and support to Hepatitis C groups in Spain in the hope of opening up a dialogue with the government.

We recommend the OSCE raises the issue of treatment for Hepatitis patients at European level, as an issue of fundamental Human Rights.

We suggest the OSCE formulate a plan of action in the event of police violence against citizens.

We urge the OSCE to raise the issue of police “black lists” with the Spanish government, and at an international level.

Report dated: 12/January/2015

PHOTOGRAPHIC & VIDEO EVIDENCE:

VIDEO: Brief background to the issue in question.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j43SuIPBOJM>

VIDEO: News report on the protest march.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaAmZUJMQa8>

Moment of tension: police block route with vans and tensions rise.
http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/1/12613438/9395042_orig.jpg

Massive and unnecessary police presence:
http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/1/12613438/3536218_orig.jpg

UIP police photographing protestors during the march:
http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/1/12613438/4666697_orig.jpg

For more photographs and videos, please visit our web site:
<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/informes.html>