

PROXY OBSERVER

SEÑALAMOS A LOS CULPABLES DE LA VIOLENCIA

Spot Report: Anti-Fascists Mobilise Against Neo-Nazi Social Centre in Madrid

Prepared for:

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INTRODUCTION:

The following is a brief “Spot Report” for the purpose of informing the OSCE / ODIHR on the latest social protest to take place in Madrid. It has been prepared by Madrid-based **Proxy Observer** and is copyright free.

The report contains comments, suggestions and recommendations on ways to improve security at such gatherings, and measures the international community could take to ensure Human Rights rights are respected in Spain.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROTEST

The austerity measures being imposed by Spain’s right-wing government on the Spanish population, have left a huge percentage of poor families without even a basic income to cover essential needs.

The Spanish left, which mobilised quickly at the start of economic crisis to defend marginalised families, now find that the extreme right in Spain are trying to cash in on the social discontent by occupying and opening their own “social centres”.

However, Unlike the social centres run by progressive social groups, Spain’s fascist **Movimiento Social Republicano** (MSR) openly defend a racist policy of helping only Spanish families, while turning away equally needy foreigners. Much the way **Golden Dawn** do in Greece.

The problem appeared to have been resolved last year, when a judge ordered the first MSR centre in *Tetuan* (Madrid) to be closed. However, the group behind that project (MSR) have now opened a new centre in *Chaberrí*.

MSR

The *Movimiento Social Republicano* (MSR) is notorious in Spain, not only because of their anti-foreigner, anti Islam propaganda, but also because of their violent actions. Although the MSR group denies attacking immigrants and foreigners, the Spanish press is full of alarming **reports** of these attacks.

What is interesting about the MSR, is their rumoured connections to some very influential people with limitless resources and contacts in “high places”. Indeed, the apparently endless **supply** of free foodstuffs at the neo-Nazi social centre, has not gone unnoticed.

Many ask themselves exactly where all the money and resources to maintain the MSR project originate from, and how it is that the reported homophobic and racist attacks have not attracted the attention of Spanish police.

LOCATION & DATE OF PROTEST:

Not surprisingly, the focus of this protest was on the building where the “social centre” is being run by the openly racist group *Movimiento Social Republicano* (MSR). The centre is located in *Bretón de Herreros Street*, in an area called *Chamberri*.

The protest started in *Quevedo* district, approximately an hour from the social centre, under a very tense atmosphere, due mainly to the presence of large numbers of the notoriously violent Spanish *antidisturbios*. (UIP).

The agreed date for the protest was the 24th of January 2015, and unusually for this type of protest, the authorities had been informed by the organisers that the event would take place, something which they are **not** legally required to do.

MASSACRE IN ATOCHA

The date on which this protest took place (24th January) is a highly symbolic one for the Spanish left. It is the day in which in 1977 a group of left-wing lawyers were massacred by fascists in their office in **Atocha**.

This fact did little to ease tensions on the day of the protest, as once again Spanish fascists and anti-fascists confronted each other, with the prospect of violent police action high, with no less than eight police vans waiting at the meeting point in *Quevedo*.

THE ORGANISERS:

The organisers of this event were local *Chamberrí* neighbours and young activists who created a group specially for this purpose. The group known as [@chamberienlucha](#) has its own web page [here](#):

Considering the age difference between activists and neighbours, the lack of experience, and short deadlines, it has to be said that the organising group did an incredibly good job, even organising their “security cordon” (protest stewards).

These factors contributed to the smooth-running of the event, even though at times the protest was tense, due mainly to the aggressive tactics adopted by Spanish police.

THE EVENT:

The turnout for this event was approximately 2,000 people of all ages and backgrounds, even pet dogs could be seen. As previously mentioned, police numbers suggested the authorities would prevent this event from going ahead, but the cool actions of the organisers won through.

As the protest march snaked its way through Madrid, protest stewards provided much-needed reassurance, as the threat of police violence slowly began to look less likely; though Spanish police often explode in a rage over nothing and without warning.

After an hour of chanting and singing, we found ourselves blocked by *antidisturbios* in *Bretón de Herreros Street*, some 200 yards from the occupied building where the MSR social centre is located.

At this point tensions shot up, as Spanish police suddenly brandished illegal **rubber bullet** rifles and put on their riot helmets. Our impression as observers is that Spanish UIP police units appear to want to deliberately cause panic among protestors to justify a violent crackdown.

In the distance, on the rooftop of the building, MSR Nazis let off red flares and chanted racist slogans. Eggs and buckets of cold water were reportedly thrown at protestors from the balconies above, possibly to provoke a reaction.

Eventually, the organisers read a manifesto condemning the racist attacks on foreigners and the protest began to disperse slowly and thankfully without incidents. Bringing a needlessly tense protest to an end.

POLICE PRESENCE:

The right to protest in Spain has always hung by a threat. The limits to those rights are set by the police themselves (not the law) who, unlike other police forces in Europe, often deliberately manufacture incidents to raise tensions.

These tactics, are a tried and tested method used during the Franco dictatorship, and Spanish police continue to use them to this day. Protest organisers in Spain are all too aware of these provocations and usually remain calm.

The OSCE probably knows that the outcome of a protest in Spain often depends on the attitude of individual police officers, and not on the actions of protestors. When the pushing starts, we observe how Spanish police lose their self-control quickly and how protestors calm the situation down.

The outcome of this protest reflects positively on the organisers of this event, and not necessarily on the police. Despite all the difficulties, the organisers of this protest were able to gather and then disperse peacefully, hundreds of people without a single incident.

Spanish police, on the other hand, turned up with their faces covered, with no ID numbers and the usual bad attitude which makes Spain's tinpot Security Forces the laughing stock of the European Community.

INJURIES and ARRESTS

No physical injuries or arrests were reported at this protest. No searches or mass ID checks were carried out.

SECRET POLICE & INFILTRATORS:

We were not informed of the presence of secret police at this protest, but it was hardly necessary when there was clearly no intent to cause harm on the part of the protest organisers.

THE AUTHORITIES

The obvious inaction of the authorities in Madrid with regard to this Nazi "social centre" is breathtaking. No-one in Europe would tolerate the presence of a radical neo-Nazi group in their neighbourhood. Yet, the MSR centre remains open as of the date of this report.

What's more, it would seem odd to our European colleagues that a government should send heavily armed police to protect Nazis who are occupying a building illegally, and from where they spread their racial hate.

In Madrid, it is only thanks to these protests and to the neighbours, activists, and social groups who organise them, that the issue of racism is on the political agenda. The community owes much to these social groups.

Our hope is that the authorities in Spain will understand that it cannot deal with fascist groups and those who resist their racist ideology with an even hand. They are not the same thing: one group are the problem, the other the solution.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS:

Our conclusion is that this protest was a moral victory for the organisers and neighbours and a wake up call to the authorities. This event has helped to raise awareness of an issue which many within the government wish to ignore.

The event went ahead peacefully and just as importantly, ended peacefully. That in itself is an example of how seriously Spanish people take their right to protest, and how any restriction on these rights can only be detrimental to Spain's democracy.

With the introduction of the new "Citizen's Security law" (Ley Mordaza / gag law) only weeks away, it is clear that limiting citizen's right to protest will only encourage far right groups to occupy more buildings.

Government inaction, counterproductive police protection and the failure to investigate fully the origin of the resources being donated at this centre, allows these radical groups to carry out their violent activities with total impunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR raise the issue of these Nazi "social centres" at EU (European Union) level.

We recommend the OSCE send representatives to discuss with the delegation in Madrid the reasons why this centre continues to remain open.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to remind the Spanish government of the responsibility it has to safeguard the nation's democratic principles.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR ask the Spanish government to launch an investigation to establish the origin of the resources being donated to the nazi centre in Madrid.

We suggest an OSCE clarify with Spanish authorities whether the police are "protecting" this centre from being closed.

We urge the OSCE to encourage Spanish police to investigate more vigorously attacks against LGBT members and foreigners living in the area near the MSR social centre.

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR ask the Spanish government to make a statement at the UN Security Council rejecting fascism and condemning General Franco's fascist regime.

Report date: 2/February/2015

RELEVANT VIDEOS & PHOTOGRAPHS:

VIDEO summary of the anti-fascist protest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhCItWZpKk8>

Antidisturbio (UIP) with gun.

http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/1/12613438/1311490_orig.jpg

Photograph of MSR nazis inside the social centre

http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/1/12613438/3854318_orig.jpg

Video: Background information about MSR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRD0qhYRuDc>

More information, photographs and videos relating to this protest here:

<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/chamberri.html>