

PROXY OBSERVER

SEÑALAMOS A LOS CULPABLES DE LA VIOLENCIA

Spot Report: “Spanish only” Social Centres, Government Complicity and Police Partiality

Prepared for:

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Reference: [#Solidaridad10Zgz](#) (5/March/2015)

INTRODUCTION:

This report outlines the main factors leading up to the most recent protest in Madrid, the origins of which are in the Spanish city of Zaragoza. The report contains an analysis of a relatively recent social phenomenon, known as "Nazi social centres", and the response to these by local anti-fascist groups and the authorities.

The report provides background details of the demonstration in Madrid, information relating to the organisers, and draws a conclusion about the actions of both the authorities and Zaragoza police.

Our report concludes with recommendations for the OSCE / ODIHR to consider. Wherever appropriate, links to relevant press articles, photographic and video sources will be included.

LOCATION & DATE OF PROTEST

The protest, which took place simultaneously in Madrid and Zaragoza, was scheduled by the organisers for the 5th of March and related to events in Zaragoza on the 28th February. Unusually for an event with such short notice, the original starting time of the protest was changed from 8pm to 8:30pm.

This did not appear to have affected turnout numbers, as the entire event was organised very effectively through social media (*Facebook / Twitter*). Spain's gag law (*Ley Mordaza*) makes this method of organising demonstrations highly risky due to the financial penalties involved.

PROTEST ORGANISERS:

The organisers of this event are a specially created group, known as [@Solidaridad10zg](#), comprised of various anti-fascist movements, who are totally committed to an anti-racist social agenda at neighbourhood level. The organising platform is made up of both local neighbours and foreign residents with a variety of profiles.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROTEST:

The March 5th protest in Madrid, came in response to the arrest of 10 anti-fascists in Zaragoza, following a fight at a Nazi style concert on Feb 28th. But more generally, the demonstration also forms part of an awareness campaign to highlight the problem of Nazi social centres appearing throughout Spain.

In addition to wanting to show solidarity with similar groups in Zaragoza, and their rejection of Nazi social centres, the organisers in Madrid also wanted to bring to the attention of the public the less than impartial role played by the police in protecting the MSR centre, as well as the complicity on the part of the Spanish state.

MSR SOCIAL CENTRES:

The growing scourge of Nazi run "social centres" in Spain and in Europe at large, was the subject of a previous [report](#) which Proxy Observer, sent the OSCE / ODIHR earlier this year. These so-called social centres, are run by right-wing groups who claim to show solidarity with the poor, but in fact, their phoney charitable work, is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to hide their true ideology.

These crude propaganda methods are also currently being used in both Italy and Greece, where rabble raising nationalist factions distribute food on a strict "no foreigners" basis. Hitler's Nazis too, held similar winter campaigns during World War II.

In Spain, the gangs behind these fake solidarity centres, include thuggish organisations such as: *Movimiento Social Republicano* (MSR), *Ultras Sur*, and the openly fascist *Spanish Falange*. Some of these radical far right movements operate outside the law, illegally occupying empty building to use as bases from where to spread their divisive message.

In recent years, bogus social centres have mushroomed across Spain, to the dismay of local residents. In Madrid and Zaragoza, MSR run two centres supplying free food to Spanish nationals only.

In Seville, fascists are striving to raise funds for a similar centre. In Valencia, political agitators known as *España 2000*, have been running their own scam for years. There is also a centre in Barcelona.

The ultimate intent of these Nazi run social centres, is to propagate the spurious message that foreigners are responsible for the economic crisis, and that without their presence there would be enough jobs and housing to go around.

The distribution of free food by these gangs is not about showing solidarity with the less well off, but rather an attempt to instil ultra nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes among an uneasy population.

THE NAZI CONCERT (FEB 28th):

To raise funds for their dubious social projects, illegal concerts are often organised. The MSR centre in Zaragoza, known as *Hogar Social Las Fuentes*, arranged a "Nazi music" concert for Feb 28th, with the aim of promoting racism and fascist ideology.

The concert, baptised with the silly name *Rock Against Communism (RAC)*, had no licence or legal permit. Neighbourhood groups warned the authorities of potential trouble several days before the concert. All such warnings fell on deaf ears and the gig was allowed to go ahead, with dire consequences.

Anti-fascist groups had also alerted Spanish police about regular fights among MSR rival members inside the Zaragoza centre. These violent incidents were well-known to the authorities, as was the identity of individual Nazi group members.

Most notorious of all is Javier Royo Blasco, a ruffian with an extremely violent past and several legal convictions, including one for grievous bodily harm (GBH) against a homeless man as recently as 2013.

ARRESTS IN ZARAGOZA:

To those who had persistently warned the authorities about the dangers of a Nazi concert, it came as no surprise when two hours into the event, a large group of MSR punks came bursting out of the centre car park armed with sticks, stones and even a fire extinguisher.

Their target was a small, but vocal group of anti-fascists, who were protesting peacefully against the concert near the MSR centre in *Compromiso de Caspe* Street, Zaragoza. Within minutes, just as local neighbours and activists had predicted, a massive street fight broke out with a local policeman seriously injured.

What followed next has sent shock waves through Spain's social movements, gravely denting the image of a normally impartial Spanish police force. Ten people were arrested. None of them MSR members. In one [video](#), Spanish police are even seen running past armed MSR members, chasing only anti-fascists.

The most alarming newspaper **article** of all, stated that according to the organisers, Spanish UIP police officers not only failed to arrest MSR Nazis, but even took sides with them by handcuffing anti-fascists and leaving them unattended near the social centre entrance for MSR members to attack.

If confirmed, this incident will only add to the disturbing rumours that Spanish police not only share ideology with the MSR, but actively support and participate in protecting these far right groups from attempts to evict them.

The concert toll? 10 arrests (no armed Nazis among them, despite shouting "*Seig Heil!*" loudly in the presence of the police). Eight injured (including a local policeman) and two anti-fascist activists in prison charged with serious public order offences.

But the biggest casualty of all, is the tarnished reputation of Spanish police, who are now starting to be seen by many, as a critical element in the propagation of Nazi centres, by apparently acting as volunteer bodyguards to MSR members.

THE PROTEST IN MADRID (March 5th):

Within days of the ten arrests, peaceful protests were organised in Madrid and Zaragoza, using the hashtag **#Solidaridad10Zgz** on social media. The objective of the protest was to show solidarity with those arrested and detained incommunicado for three days. As of the date of this report, two of those arrested on Feb 28th remain in prison as a preventative measure.

The protest in Madrid was a gathering, as opposed to a demonstration with a set route. The meeting point for the event was the *Puerta del Sol*, where four gleaming police vans awaited our arrival. An enthusiastic group of approximately 200 protestors stood behind a hand-written banner calling for the immediate release of those imprisoned.

The event was surprisingly brief; only half an hour. During that time activists shouted rhyming slogans like: "*Nazi de día, de noche policía*". Meaning: "*Nazi by day, policeman by night*", alluding strongly to the perceived link between far right groups and Spanish police. A handful of freelance photographers turned up but no TV crews.

From speaking to those present, the consensus was that protestors were "scared of being fined", a practice which is often used by the police to deter protestors from participating in demonstrations, and which Spain's new gag law will soon take to a chilling extreme.

Throughout the half-hour event, Spanish UIP police stood in a perfectly straight row with their faces covered up, at a distance of approximately twelve yards away from where we stood. At 9pm a manifesto was read out, and the gathering slowly came to an end without any incidents.

THE MANIFESTO:

A rousing manifesto was passionately read out at the end of the *Puerta del Sol* protest; we have included it in our updated [web](#). The message of solidarity from organisers was as expected. The complicity which event organisers feel exists on the part of the Spanish state towards these Nazi run centres, was strongly condemned.

Just as some media sources had also claimed in their reporting, protest organisers criticised the apparent "protection" offered by Spanish police to social centre organisers. The assertion by activists that a far right ideology is intrinsic to police culture, is a devastating blow to the image of the Spanish state.

As bewildered organisers pointed out in their manifesto, it does seem odd that peaceful groups, local neighbours and social movements who criticise these Nazi centres are mercilessly attacked by the police with baton charges, smoke bombs and repression.

Like many before have already remarked, the actions of Spanish police during the concert in Zaragoza, does not appear to be an isolated case, but rather a reflection of the values of the forces of law and order.

Certainly, the longer these Nazi run centres are given protection from closure and watched over keenly by the UIP, the greater the potential damage to the reputation of Spanish police.

POLICE ID CHECKS:

Our information is that on the day of the protest in Madrid, at least two people were forced to identify themselves by the UIP for no good reason. This incident occurred as activists were starting to gather at the meeting point in *Puerta del Sol*.

As mentioned in previous spot reports, ID checks are usually followed by sizeable fines which inevitably have a dissuasive effect on those wishing to participate in future demonstrations.

As of July 1st, when it is envisaged that Spain's repressive *Citizen Security Law* (gag law) will come into being, those fines will be far greater in quantity and frequency to ensure they have the desired effect.

ARRESTS AND INJURIES:

No arrests were reported during the Mar 5 demonstration in either Madrid or Zaragoza. The OSCE / ODIHR should interpret this information with caution. In our opinion, it confirms our assertion that public disorder episodes are rarely provoked by protestors themselves, as such actions inevitably lead to arrests.

Our firm belief is that public disorder occurs as a consequence of the actions of the forces of law and order in Spain. Anti-fascist groups have consistently shown us at these protests, that it is never in their interest to inflame a situation.

The OSCE / ODIHR should compare the outcome of similar protests against MSR centres in Madrid and Zaragoza, to understand which factors contributed to the breakdown of law and order.

POLICE PRESENCE:

Spanish police are a highly politicised force. Their yardstick for measuring perceived threats to public order, is based purely on ideological prejudices and not quantifiable risk factors. This is evident from the different treatment given to organisations with left wing or anarchist tendencies during demonstrations.

There is a higher propensity for Spanish police to use repressive measures and spontaneous violence at demonstrations where protestors have a radically different ideology to that found in police culture.

The violent actions of riot police (*antidisturbios*) are in effect, an uncontrolled emotional reaction to these differences in political ideology, and not a trained response to a physical threat.

The fact that Spanish authorities permit and even encourage armed UIP officers to cover their faces at these demonstrations, is an acknowledgement that the true function of Spain's militarised riot police is not to safeguard public safety, or guarantee rights, but rather to instil fear and suppress libertarian ideologies considered a threat by Spain's authoritarian regime.

SECRET POLICE AND INFILTRATORS:

The presence of *Secretas* (secret police) was very much in evidence immediately before the start of the protest. As mentioned earlier in this report, two people were identified at random in the *Puerta del Sol* area by undercover police.

Spain's repressive *Citizen Security Law* (gag law), allows police to legally compile blacklists based on political profiling, and it is likely that this was the objective in identifying the two individuals.

THE AUTHORITIES:

Spanish authorities appear to be on an urgent mission to criminalise whole sections of society, including: students, victims of mortgage fraud, social movements, victims of Franco's dictatorship and even political opponents.

They are hoping to achieve this through a gamut of repressive legal changes, such as: the new gag law (Ley Mordaza), highly questionable modifications to the criminal code, vague anti-terrorist laws which criminalise the exchange of information on social media and other changes to the legal system.

The result of this manipulation of justice, is that peaceful street protests, or attempts to stop forced evictions on the grounds of solidarity, are now riskier than ever, with many political activists falling foul of the law.

The latest police **roundup** of activists saw 19 PAH members (an anti-eviction group) dragged from their homes at gun point, after participating in a noisy but eventless protest in Madrid.

It is evident from this level of repression, that Spain is fast lurching towards a police state, and that public demonstrations of dissent are being ruthlessly punished to dissuade further protests.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS:

Our conclusion is that this demonstration forms part of a calculated "*cause and effect*" strategy engineered by Madrid. The authorities misuse police resources in pre-planned ideologically-based repressive operations, such as the ones outlined in this report, in order to provoke a backlash response.

The resulting street protests are then severely crushed, often ruthlessly, to instil a sense of collective fear and helplessness. The objective is to impose an obedient silence on dissenting groups.

Spain's regime has adopted this aggressive stance towards pro-democracy movements, as a means of stemming growing social criticism of government corruption and mismanagement of the economy.

It is a tried and tested formula, which involves making a political use of Spain's security forces, and the careful tuning of Spanish laws, to ensure legal protection and security for the government at the cost of disgruntled citizens.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS:

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR clarify with Madrid the circumstances behind the failure by Zaragoza police to arrest armed MSR members during a street fight on the 28th February.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to ask Madrid to explain whether the government considers the actions of anti-fascist groups to be a greater threat to society than those of Nazi groups.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR ask Madrid to outline its response to the problem of Nazi run social centres in Spain.

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to clarify with the Spanish government whether it agrees with the "*Spanish only*" philosophy adopted by these Nazi groups, or whether they intend to condemn it.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to discuss with Madrid the function of police units in Zaragoza on Feb 28, and whether they were there to protect the occupiers of the building.

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR ask Madrid to confirm whether they had received warnings of trouble from local neighbours before the concert.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR clarify with Madrid why Zaragoza police only arrested unarmed protestors and then allowed MSR members to assault handcuffed suspects.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to seek a full explanation with regard to the injured police officer, and the circumstances behind his injuries.

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to invite Madrid to comment on the increasing damage being done to the reputation of Spanish police, who are now seen as acting in a highly partisan manner.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR request an explanation from Madrid with regard to the tactics adopted by the UIP on Feb 28.

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to clarify with Madrid the reasons behind the two unwarranted ID checks in *Puerta del Sol*, and whether any details were added to a police blacklist.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to raise the issue of covered faces by the police with Madrid, and ask for an explanation of these tactics.

We also urge the OSCE / ODIHR to discuss with Madrid the reported ideological and political culture that exists within Spanish police forces, and whether they consider this to be appropriate.

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR ask Madrid how much longer these Nazi run centres will remain open.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR ask Madrid to outline the social values held by Spanish security forces, and whether these coincide with those of MSR.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to clarify with Madrid which factors contributed to the breakdown of law and order during peaceful demonstrations.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR discuss with Madrid whether the political ideology of protestors is an influencing factor in the decision by police to break up some demonstrations and not others.

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to investigate the reasons behind the decision by Madrid to allow UIP officers to hide their faces at demonstrations.

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR ask Madrid for an explanation with regard to the arrest in their homes, of several PAH (anti-eviction) activists.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to confirm with Madrid whether they intend to continue with their repressive tactics towards pro-democracy movements in Spain.

Finally, we ask the OSCE / ODIHR to seek an urgent meeting with Madrid, to discuss the systematic criminalisation of social movements in Spain.

Report date 17/Mar/2015

RELEVANT VIDEOS & PHOTOGRAPHS:

VIDEO of street fight in Zaragoza (Feb 28)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IWAy_Fr24c

Poster of event in Madrid (Mar 5)
<http://goo.gl/YH3drs>

Photograph of protest in *Puerta del Sol*
<http://goo.gl/iqYxUD>

Photographs and background information on this protest
<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/antifazaragoza.html>

For more reports on past and future protests
<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/informes.html>