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Spanish state

Pedro Sánchez crosses the Rubicon

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There are actions that mark a fundamental change, a before and an after in the characterisation of a person, a party or a government. Crossing the Rubicon has had that meaning ever since Julius Caesar crossed this small river, initiated a civil war and then had himself appointed dictator for life.

With the political approval of the massacre of 37 migrants in Melilla, Pedro Sánchez has crossed his Rubicon. Without a radical rectification, each day more unlikely, he and his government will not be able to lay any claim to being progressive and it will become a government of infamy.

The fundamental data for this conclusion can be found in the magnificent article “Not in Our Name” that Olga Rodríguez published in eldiario.es. Sánchez has described the attempt to cross the fence as a violent attack on the territorial integrity of Spain, has defended the actions of the Moroccan and Spanish police, has not expressed any condolences to the families of the victims, has not announced any independent investigation into the facts, has placed the responsibility on the mafias that traffic in human beings and has not announced the dismissal of any minister.

This massacre is the culmination of the policies of institutional racism that have been going on for years in the Spanish State, both under the PP and PSOE governments:

- The refusal to ensure legal and safe pathways for people seeking refuge and to give them a dignified welcome, as the war in Ukraine has shown was possible.
- The reluctance to carry out maritime rescues, and the obstruction of the activity of ships from Non Government Organisation which do accomplish this, which has turned the Mediterranean Sea into the deadliest border in the world.
- The turning back of immigrants at the border without individually verifying whether they have the right to apply for asylum, violating one of the basic principles of the Geneva Convention. Despite the changed opinion of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg which endorsed the turn-backs as a result of a breach of the Melilla border fence, the vast majority of human rights organisations have disagreed with this decision.
- The confinement of undocumented migrants who manage to reach the peninsula in Foreign Detention Centres (CIE), as a first step in the expulsion of many of them. It should be remembered that not having papers is not a crime but only an administrative offence and that people locked up in the CIEs receive much worse treatment than if they were in prison.
- The use of disproportionate violence against people who try to scale the fences or who swim along the coast. In El Tarajal this violence caused the deaths of 15 people in 2014 when the Partido Popular governed. In 2022 the Supreme Court finally filed the case against the 16 indicted Civil Guards.

But the Melilla massacre represents a qualitative leap due to several factors: the large number of deaths and injuries, the political justification given by Pedro Sánchez and some ministers, and the fact that it has been part of a long-term strategy. In the first place because of the change in position on the Sahara, aimed precisely at buying Morocco's repression against migrants trying to reach Europe. And because a few days ago the Foreign Minister asked NATO

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to consider immigration on the southern border as a "hybrid threat" that should be combated militarily. This strategy implies that other similar events will be repeated in the future.

Adopting this policy means depriving elementary human rights, justifying repression and the use of violence, even that which results in death, against an entire social group made up of migrants who try to reach Europe either through the south of the peninsula or via the Canary Islands. This dehumanisation of entire human collectives is a germinal characteristic of fascism.

Since the electoral rise of Vox, there has been talk, justifiably, of the danger that this neo-fascist party could form a government with the PP, but it is too often forgotten that these parties advance thanks to fascist-looking measures taken by governments that are not. Effectively combatting the fascist danger implies combatting the policies that bear its mark, in particular the dehumanisation of social groups, regardless of the government that applies them.

With his attitude towards the events in Melilla, Pedro Sánchez has jumped the ethical, moral and political barriers on Human Rights that every progressive government should respect. He has been instrumental in allowing the policies of the reactionary right and neo-fascism to take root in communities before winning at the polls. He has paved the way for the victory of the PP and Vox.

Since June 25th, Pedro Sánchez has not rectified his position, which should at least consist of acknowledging that he was wrong, condemning the actions of the Moroccan and Spanish police, creating an independent commission of investigation and dismissing Minister Grande Marlaska for being most directly involved. Instead both Sánchez and the PSOE ministers reaffirmed their position. For this reason, I believe that no person from the left, democrat or defender of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should support the government of Pedro Sánchez. In particular, I think that Unidas Podemos does not go far enough with lamenting the deaths and requesting an investigation commission; I think that it should leave the government so as not to be an accomplice of events such as those at Melilla, it should go into opposition and try to contribute to the creation of an alternative.

The repeated phrase that by not supporting Pedro Sánchez the door will be open to the PP and Vox, who are worse, is false. The worst thing is that a supposedly left-wing government carries out reactionary right-wing and extreme right-wing policies. The worst thing is to skip the ethical, political and humanitarian principles essential for the defense of life, rights and dignity of people. The worst thing is to suffer reactionary policies without raising an alternative.

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Translated by David Fagan for International Viewpoint.

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