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Spanish state

# Defend Pablo Hasel the rapper, defend democratic rights in the Spanish State

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**Over the last four nights we have seen big demonstrations and also some pitched battles between mostly young protesters and the police of the Spanish State.** [1] They are outraged at yet another attack on democratic rights and free speech. Pablo Hasel (Pablo Rivadulla Duro, 32 years old) is a rapper from Catalonia who for many years has used his talent to denounce the regime and to argue for radical change. He took on the stage name Hasel in honour of a character from an Arab story who assassinates kings. The courts, still very much in the hands of the right wing and those nostalgic for the fascist Franco, handed down a sentence of two and half years.

## Criticise the monarchy, go to jail

He rapped and tweeted public attacks on the monarchy and his support for armed groups like ETA (a group that fights for Basque independence).

Pablo sees his mission to raise the consciousness of the people and to overthrow the capitalist dictatorship. In his song [Juan Carlos el Bobon](#) (Juan Carlos the dumbbo/idiot) he calls the ex-King a mafia boss and a whore. Given that it is a proven fact that Juan Carlos was corrupt and used his position to get big kickbacks from foreign governments, as well as being a notorious philanderer, Hasel's defence is clearly right – he was talking about objective facts. Indeed Juan Carlos abdicated and is now in exile due to the scandals. This king played an important role in managing the transition from the fascist Franco regime (1938 to 76) to a more modern capitalist one with severe anti-democratic hangovers from Francoism. Both the current ruling PSOE (Socialist Workers Party – like the Labour Party) and the Communist Party of the time collaborated in this 'blocked' transition.

## How Podemos and the PSOE government have responded

Today the PSOE is in government supported by the radical Podemos group to its left. Its spokespeople have been quick to condemn the 'violence' of the young protester but to be silent on the relish in which the fascist infiltrated police used their weapons against them. A demonstrator in Barcelona has already lost an eye. There have been demonstrations of thousands in a number of cities but the hot spots are in Barcelona and Catalonia where Hasel comes from. Last night banks were attacked.

Podemos, despite its ministers, has, to its honour, refused to condemn the violence and raised its ongoing concerns about the big democratic deficit in the present judicial and constitutional arrangements in the Spanish state. Its position has been fiercely attacked by key PSOE leaders. Pedro Sanchez, the prime minister, has made a veiled attack on those who do not condemn violence and attacks on democracy. "In a full democracy like Spain's violence is unacceptable" (*El Pais* 19 Feb). He did not indicate the police as the source of violence or how a democracy can be complete with laws condemning attacks on the monarchy and the problem of self determination for Catalonia unresolved. Legal changes are being proposed by the PSOE to make it more difficult for courts being used by rightist prosecutors to jail people for free speech offences. The Spanish State has quite a few laws that give police a lot of leeway in dealing with demonstrations.

Clearly the Podemos leadership is worried about losing its significant support amongst younger people. It has called for Hasel to be pardoned, not released. Hasel himself refuses a pardon because he correctly believes he has done

nothing wrong. A Podemos spokesman on 20 February did clarify that while it supported protests it was against 'violent methods' of the minority. It is trying, to a degree, to ride two horses.

# A response from Anticapitalistas

Raul Camargo and Lorena Cabrerizo, who are spokespeople for Anticapitalistas, have published an article in the [El Publico](#) national news site. We have translated some extracts that can help us further understand what is going on.

The protests for the release of Pablo Hasel are no coincidence. They are spontaneous, but they reflect the consciousness of a sector of young people who know that things are not going well. Freedom in this country is a fact that is constantly under threat, and it does not always come free. (...) There is an entirely legitimate youthful dissatisfaction. High unemployment figures, a privileged totally corrupt political class at the service of the interests of the economic elites, and the feeling that the future will be worse: this is the backdrop for the mobilisations(...).

We want to show our support for these protests, hypocritically attacked by the regime's spokespersons. We call to participate in them, this is what the anti-capitalist activists have done. The sudden concern about street furniture by the talk shows and politicians (who never say anything about the fires in the villages of Almeria and Huelva where migrant farm workers live in poverty) is an attempt to criminalise totally legitimate protests and to hide the underlying problems.

The repression of the protests and the brutal policing show another problem. The behaviour of state security forces are increasingly corporatist, aggressive towards the population and linked to the repressive agenda of the extreme right. Police organisations are the core of the organised social base of the far right and this problem needs to be addressed. They will take advantage of the situation to counterattack, try to isolate social protest and to strengthen themselves with the complicity of the political and media establishment. Faced with this, we need an overall strategy that allows us to broaden the field of protest, avoiding the isolation of the struggles, linking problems to an agenda of our own.

Basically, what we are seeing are the first throes of a social crisis that is going to be very deep and that will undoubtedly have important political repercussions. The progressive government's bid to avoid any kind of change is translating into increasing disaffection among the people on the left. Podemos is trying to maintain a critical stance on some issues (to their credit, they have not joined in the criminalisation of protest for now) but lacks the social strength to influence the government's future. This contributes to its disengagement with the street: being in government under the command of the PSOE, as some of us have already warned, is not translating into appreciable social improvements, and it is translating into a loss of credibility.

(...) From the social and political left we need a strategy for new situation. Alongside the spontaneous mobilisations of the youth, many other demands need to be raised: the defence of housing, the gift of European funds to big business, the failure of social policies such as the Minimum Living Income, the privatisation of public health, the non-repeal of the labour reform, the fight for liberties...(...) We are aware that the left is not at its best and that internal rifts and mutual distrust are part of the equation. We are not going to fall into the bureaucratic cant of demanding the unity of the left, and even less so to do so around this failed 'progressive' government. What we do urgently need is to turn these protests onto the offensive. This means avoiding the isolation of the protests, broadening them and involving more and more social sectors.

*20 February*

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[1] *The Guardian*, 17 February "[Spanish riot police clash with protesters after rapper arrested](#)".