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Spanish state

Miguel Urbán: "There are still set-ups like the one I suffered. There are police infiltrating social movements."

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP605 - June 2025 -
Publication date: Saturday 21 June 2025

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[Miguel Urbán](#) is a veteran activist in the anti-establishment left. A veteran of the Occupy Movement and a long-standing member of Anticapitalistas, his name is once again making headlines, something he had become less accustomed to since his party split with Podemos in 2020, in disagreement over its participation in the government.

[In May] elDiario.es, an on-line newspaper in Spain, revealed details of a secret investigation against him by the Anti-Drug Prosecutor's Office in 2016, sponsored by powerful police commissioners. Urbán was falsely implicated in an alleged Venezuelan cocaine operation intended to illegally finance Podemos. Urbán gave this interview to eldiario.es from Sao Paulo, where he travelled to present his book "Trumpisms: Neoliberal and Authoritarian."

Why you? What was the objective in implicating you in the drug ring and financing of Podemos?

I don't think they had any special interest in me as a person. Just as I don't think they had any special interest in Iglesias [\[1\]](#) as a person. What they wanted was to destroy a group and destroy ideas. It could have been that I was one of the most recognised figures in Anticapitalistas and one of the best-known public figures in Podemos. Investigating me was an excuse to investigate the Anticapitalistas group and Podemos as a whole. I think it's absurd to think they were investigating me as an excuse to investigate Pablo because there were already other cases involving Pablo.

Why in the first half of 2016?

This is a key moment for the politics of change. I think the establishment got a shock in the European elections, but the biggest shock comes when we suddenly win in Madrid, we win in Barcelona, in Zaragoza, in Cádiz, we win in Valencia, in Santiago de Compostela, we win in Oviedo and in A Coruña. And they think, 'This could be serious.' That's where I think they activate this crazy operation. It coincides with the two general elections, those of December 2015 and June 2016, in which we could have overtaken the Socialist Party. In fact, other plots were also being developed during those months, such as the Grenadines account or the alleged PISA report. [\[2\]](#) These were frantic months of operation by the gutter press, by the state apparatus, but also by the media and economic powers, all trying at any cost to prevent us from becoming the country's leading electoral force. That was the key element.

How did it feel to find out you were the target of a secret investigation so many years later?

At first, I felt intense anxiety. The first thing I knew was that they were linking me to a drug exchange, and that's why they'd broken into Pablo Iglesias's accounts and others. I thought, 'What could they have come up with?' When you know more details, you see the crude, the comical, even some surreal aspects... That takes some of the tension off. But you're more anxious about not knowing than about what you do know.

It was also a very difficult time for me personally. My mother was dying. She passed away two weeks after I first learned about this. I'd been feeling bad for several weeks, and things were all mixed up. I also felt fragile. You say, 'These guys could have screwed up my life.' And then there's the impunity they enjoy: the perpetrators aren't just anyone. There are a lot of fascists in the state security apparatus, but these weren't just nobodies; they were the bosses, with all that that implies.

They want to create fragility, to make you not try anything again, to not move, to want it to be all over. It creates a mixed feeling. On the one hand, you think: 'Well, it happened ten years ago. Let's let it go. I don't want to stir up any more trouble.' Because in the end, it hurts you. But this can't be ignored. We must speak out and point out that we have a problem with democracy in our country. They weren't attacking a group that was planning a power grab. Podemos was a party that was running in the elections. So you question how far they're capable of going, how far they would have been capable of going.

Are you going to take legal action?

This needs to be discussed with my Anticapitalistas comrades. I've spoken with Iglesias about contacting Podemos's lawyers; they're involved in the case at the National Court and we need to see if we can get involved there. But we have to decide this collectively within Anticapitalistas. Politics is a collective pursuit. I will advocate for our action. We can't let it go unchallenged.

Could something like this happen again?

Obviously. The Zaragoza Six have been in prison for a year. The kids haven't done anything. They're innocent but they are being punished. When you see that the police had someone involved, infiltrated, in Madrid's social movements for 20 years; when you have infiltrators in environmental organisations, in neighbourhood movements, against logging, in groups like District 14 in Cartagena, neighbourhood groups... It's not just something that can happen, it's something that is happening.

The problem of the sewers, the problem of the state apparatus... the flaws in the democratic system remain, and the seams in the 1978 regime and the seams in our liberal democracy, which we are told is perfect, are showing. And it isn't perfect. Not all ideas are permitted. The right to protest, the right to dissent, is not allowed. We have the six CNT comrades from the Suiza company who will surely go to jail for their union activity. It's a real shame.

To think this can't happen is naive, because it's already happening, and that's the serious thing, and that's why I don't want to let it go. They weren't against me, they were against some ideas. And it will continue if we do nothing.

20 May 2025

Translated by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint** from eldiario.es.

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[1] Pablo Iglesias co-founder of Podemos and member from 2014 until 2021.

[2] Pablo Iglesias Sociedad Anónima or Pablo Iglesias Pty Ltd report published by right-wing media spreading false information on Podemos.