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Spanish state

The spark that lit a prairie fire: let's organise a hot autumn

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On Wednesday, 23 September, the police evicted Maricarmen in Madrid. Maricarmen is an 87-year-old woman whose rent was gradually increased by a vulture fund, until the fund decided it wanted the flat for new business ventures. In that sense, her case is not so unusual: in Spain, there are thousands of evictions every year. The housing movement fights against them every day, often in the face of a media blackout that looks the other way when it comes to a tragedy that is part of everyday life in working-class neighbourhoods. [\[1\]](#)

However, this case has been the spark that started a wildfire. The deeply disturbing images reflect an undeniable reality. Housing is the main concern of the working class. Rents have risen exponentially in recent years; unchecked tourism has taken over neighbourhoods and towns across Spain; and people's purchasing power has declined as prices have soared: an entire generation is being denied access to housing, and over the course of eight years of progressive governments, the problem has only become worse.

The mobilisation has not been confined to Madrid: a movement driven by solidarity and frustration has swept through many cities, from Granada to Valladolid. Saturday's demonstration in Madrid, organised by the Tenants' Union, which ended with a sit-in at Puerta del Sol, has marked a qualitative leap in the conflict. This is no longer a sector-specific or single issue fight: housing has come to symbolise the great failure of Spain's progressive administrations, highlighting the fact that eight years of government – first under a PSOE-Podemos coalition and now under a PSOE-SUMAR coalition – have failed to tackle the structural problems faced by working people.

In this regard, the housing movement represents a new social force that could develop into a decisive one. On the one hand, the political climate has changed: faced with a right wing on the offensive against migrants in the wake of the Ceuta crisis, the housing movement is capable of putting forward a different agenda. It has also thrown the progressive camp off balance – a camp that seems to be able to survive only by blackmailing left-wing supporters with fears of the right, whilst keeping intact the policies that allow capitalist profit at the expense of the working class. It appears that the government can no longer ignore this problem: the failure of such 'historic victories' as the housing law make any further attempts at window-dressing impossible.

But just because the mood has changed does not mean that the balance of forces has. The right remains more powerful than the popular camp; the progressives will try to defuse the situation through a combination of blackmail and attempts at 'passive reforms' – that is, crumbs to curb the mobilisation. However, these efforts are hampered by the profound loss of credibility suffered by the parties that have been in government in recent years. Neither Sumar nor Podemos have a significant presence or influence within the housing movement, despite the attempts by their public figures to reposition themselves: without activist networks and with their pro-government strategy now discredited, the progressive bloc faces serious difficulties in using these parties as a conduit in the negotiating tactics with which they seek to contain the social movement.

The challenge facing the grassroots movement is to avoid the parliamentary trap and put independent mass political action center stage. The Tenants' Union's programme – including the so-called 'Maricarmen Decree' and other key measures such as the expropriation of properties owned by vulture funds and banks to create a stock of public housing, an immediate 50 per cent reduction in rents, and a cap on rents at 20 per cent of wages – offers a sound programme for unifying the movement and providing it with a vision of change to be achieved through its social and political strength.

This requires a qualitative leap in terms of organisation and tactics, so that the movement can adopt a strategy that

enables it to grow stronger in the long term. We need to raise the possibility of actions such as a general strike, which will prevent the movement from becoming bogged down in one phase without being able to move on to the next. A general strike requires building a broad policy of alliances, with its own confrontational perspective: it cannot be a strike by union minorities; it must draw in all possible sectors of the trade union movement, whilst combining this with a wider range of actions, as we saw in the 8 March feminist strikes.

A perspective of this nature would allow us to incorporate other demands of our class, such as wage demands from industrial sectors or the powerful education movement currently developing in several autonomous regions. If we take this perspective seriously, we must always strive to broaden our social base, mobilising from the grassroots and putting pressure on all trade union and social sectors to move in that direction.

28 September 2026

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Anticapitalistas](#).

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[1] Photo: Maricarmen Abascal. Foto: Fernando Sánchez /Europa Press