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Spanish state

Notes on the General strike in Barcelona, 11 November 2026

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WHAT FOLLOWS ARE my own observations. I have been a member of the Sant Martí, Barcelona district committee of "Ens costa la vida," the principal coalition of housing rights organizations and minority unions (such as the CGT) planning the General strike in Barcelona. I was on the agitation/propaganda committee, which leafletted several locations and put up posters around our district. We had between 60 and 100 in attendance at our district meetings. There were at least a dozen other district committees also operating. The housing unions seemed to be the principal movers behind the coalition. [[1]]



Banners blocking Glòries. Left, "Raise salaries, dignified housing, strike committee." Right: "No more evictions. Expropriate the vulture funds."

10:00 AM. I arrive at the Glòries shopping mall. This is part of the international Westfield chain which has several malls in the United States as well. We block off the entrance to the mall. A CGT contingent had gone inside to make sure everything was shut. Another CGT contingent marches to another location. Many youth from the housing rights unions were standing in front of the entrance. When the organizers realize we have more than enough to block the gates, they ask us to spread down the block to block off MacDonalds. That results in that store closing down as well.



A CGT contingent afer having checked to make sure everything is shut down at the Glòries mall.

Messages keep circulating on our WhatsApp list. Urgent requests for people to come help block other neighborhood locations. Small groups respond. A message on the Anticapitalistes Telegram channel says that the construction work on the Rambla (the main tourist attraction) has been shut. I see in front of me the major street construction sites along Avinguda Diagonal are also empty. These are both massive and long-lasting infrastructure projects.



The UGT banner telling construction workers not to work here.

10:15 AM. Suddenly the crowd outside the Glòries gate is swelled by district strike committee members emerging from inside the mall reporting that everything is shut. We have far more people than we need and contingents begin to form to shut down other places.

10:30. I follow a contingent of maybe 75 people toward the Poblenou neighborhood. They are chanting, “People without houses, houses without people, can’t understand.” (It rhymes and sounds better in Catalan).

10:45. The contingent now seems to have at least 100, with many CGT banners. Some messages circulate on our district WhatsApp group acknowledging the difficulty of coordinating so many contingents.

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Invading the Sheraton Hotel while chanting strike slogans.

11:00 AM. On Rambla del Poblenou, a major tourist and commercial boulevard, we stop to block the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. Hotels and shopping malls are targeted because of their roles in bidding up real estate prices. A few dozen move into the lobby to chant strike slogans. “Long live the struggle of the working class!” Eventually we are kicked out. Actually, shutting this down was never plausible given all the guests inside.



Closing down a convenience store.

11:15. We march further along the Rambla del Poblenou to temporarily block PrimaPrix, a chain store.

Our people have filled the entrance of Mercadona, a major supermarket chain. Customers can exit but newer shoppers are turned away. The store sets off the fire alarm, which draws no response from the police parked a block away. Finally, management agrees to shut the metal curtain and the window shades. The protesters emerge cheering. An additional chant now, “A-Anti-Anticapitalistes!”

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Closing a major supermarket. The sign reads: “Students and teachers on strike.” Dozens had filled the entrance chanting strike slogans, ultimately forcing the store to close.

After marching around to find other targets to shut, we return to Mercadona and see it is still shut. At that point two groups of elementary school students, led by their teachers, march up Poblenou. They stop by us and we all exchange exuberant cheers. Teachers and students have played a major role in the buildup to this day. Every school in our neighborhood has been adorned with protest and general strike signs, complaining of underfunding, lack of housing for the students, and lack of support services.



Seen at my metro station on Nov. 3. On the left: “Next stop: General Strike 11N.” On the right are the stops: “Raise salaries, Public housing, Lower the rents, General Strike 11N.”

Turning the corner we shut down another supermarket, Bonpreu.

A report was posted on the Anticapitalistes list that 50-65% of commerce had closed in Barcelona. My thoroughly subjective glance around the neighborhood is consistent with that. There are some bars and small restaurants open, especially those that belong to larger café chains. But at least half have their shutters down. For the establishments the protesters closed, the result was more disruption than full closure, as many seemed able to reopen later in the day. The intent was also to reach workers inside. There were few conflicts with employees in these stores. The one

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exception was at Bonpreu, where one protester appeared to have expropriated an apple.

5:00 PM. The main march. Feeder groups converged on Passeig de Gràcia, a major commercial and tourist boulevard which reminds me of New York's 5th Avenue, but in Catalan modernisme style. The photos and captions tell the story. The crowd has been estimated at 400,000. I've seen reports of mass rallies in the Basque country, Valencia, and Madrid so far. In Madrid there were 500,000 in the streets and that number might have been higher had it not rained so hard there. (Fortunately, the rains came to Barcelona only later in the evening.)



Anticapitalistes contingent preparing to march in the morning.

The crowd was so massive, packed, and slow moving it was hard to see all the contingents there. But the energy levels were quite high. The Anticapitalistes led those around us in singing one of the songs from the French protests, translated into Catalan. A group of French students, who had come to support the general strike, joined in and then sang the original French version.

The rally was larger than many of the organizers seemed to expect, which is good given the deep crisis into which the Spanish state is about to enter. Most expect a center-right government to emerge from the snap elections called for November 29. In my district committee, the very young leaders had said all along that the general strike was the best way to prepare for the fight against a right-wing government.

11 November 2026

*Source: **Against the Current**.*

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[1] All Photos: Kit Adam Wainer

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