

## The Spanish Revolution grows and spreads

Protestors have decided to keep up their camp in the Puerta del Sol in Madrid after voting in the local and regional elections on Sunday, despite the decision of the Junta Electoral to ban marches on Saturday and Sunday



There are now thousands of people concentrated in the Puerta del Sol in the centre of Madrid, ever more convinced that Sunday, the day of the local and regional elections, will not be the last day of their protest.

One key policy has emerged from the protestors – they want changes to the electoral law, and are calling for open candidate lists and a law of political responsibility. The latter would bring an end to indicted candidates being placed on lists. They want to see politicians' wages controlled and large law changes submitted to referendum.

As they bring the wide range of ideas together, a spokesman said that they are now compiling their list of demands, with an assembly held on Thursday generating wide debate. They want to see fiscal reform that favours those on a low income, they demand dignified housing, and the ability to cancel mortgage debt if the property becomes embargoed.

They want to see a single constituencies arranged proportionally to the number of votes in each area, and want blank voting slips to be counted and considered as an option. They demand an end to private funding of political parties, and have even come up with some ideas for reform of the Senate and the regional governments.

They want an end to temporary work agencies, rubbish contracts, and want to see the minimum wage increased to 900 € a month. They demand that financial rescues be directed at families facing eviction rather than at the banks.

The 'Democracia Real Ya' protestors, also known as the 15-M group, now say they can be known as 'Toma la Plaza'.

As numbers swelled in the Puerta del Sol on Thursday night as a demonstration set for 8pm got underway, the chants rang out against the two political parties. 'PSOE, PP it's all the same shit, they don't represent us'.

It would be wrong to think that it is only the youth which is demonstrating. Fathers with their sons and grandparents with their grandchildren are also on the streets.

Simon Hunter from El País reported one pensioner was heard speaking to a punk youth next to him, 'I don't understand it. I don't understand how we are here again after everything we went through during the dictatorship. Now it's your turn. Now you represent me. Not them'.

The Junta Electoral has meanwhile ratified their decision declaring the camp in Puerta del Sol to be illegal. The protests were in the hands of eight magistrates and five professors, and news came late on Thursday that demonstrations planned for Saturday are also banned. Five voted in favour of the decision, four against and there was one abstention.

The police have said that they have not moved in to clear the plaza as 'there are too many people'. Sociologists have warned that protests will swell even more if there are attempts to end the current gatherings. One protestor was heard to comment, 'This movement is independent and above prohibition'.

Attention is now focussed on the Deputy Prime Minister, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, who when asked about the police's decision not to intervene on Wednesday, said the decision was 'appropriate'. He is yet to comment on the decision over Saturday's marches.

The Constitutional Court considers, looking at previous rulings, that demonstrations can be prohibited on the day of reflection only if their aim is to capture votes, and that does not seem to be the case here, in fact almost the opposite.

Those who have been sleeping in the square say they will continue to do so 'indefinitely', remaining after Sunday's elections. More than 52,000 signatures have been collected calling for an ongoing protest. Teams to share out food and on cleaning duties have been organised. Tonight the weathermen say it will



The group has also called a series of demonstrations to be held on Saturday, the day of reflection before voting when political activity is generally banned. They say they should be allowed to march to express their freedom of speech.

In Barcelona more than a thousand people have remained in the Plaza de Cataluña despite a call for them to move on. At one point an Argentinean style Cacerolada was held, as protestors banged pots and pans. A similar event in Valencia attracted some 150 people.

There have also been demonstrations in Zaragoza where some are camping in the Plaza del Pilar, in Oviedo in the Plaza de la Escandalera,

In Sevilla about 1,500 protestors took to the streets on Thursday evening, and a protest in the Plaza de la Encarnación attracted about 300 despite torrential rain.

There is also a new international aspect to the protests, being spread across borders on Twitter with many hastags including #spanishrevolution. Rome, Milan and Florence also all saw protests on Thursday night. Events are also planned in Brussels, Copenhagen, Mexico City and Buenos Aires.

Response from Spain's political leaders to the protests has been varied, to say the least...

Mariano Rajoy, PP leader, commented that 'Things like this week's protests did not happen when his party was in power'. He also commented that 'democracy is taking the votes away from Government when it is not up to the job.

The Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, said that 'The protestors should be listened to because they have reasons to be discontent'. However he also told them that change and improvements are obtained by working and voting.

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