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## The Jihadist Dream to Liberate Spain

By [Aaron Hanscom](#)

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Earlier this year a [jihadist document](#) calling for the liberation of so-called occupied territories and issued by the al-Qaeda-linked group Nadim al-Magrebi was posted on the Islamic extremist website Alansar. In most European capitals, where the cult of [Palestinianism](#) reins supreme, such demands are often met with approval since the occupied land in question is usually Israeli. But this time the statement addressed Spain—not Israel. It warned of a “holy war against the infidel Spanish state which has occupied the two cities.”

The two cities in question are Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves on the North African coast which Spain gained control of nearly 500 years ago. Melilla, with a population of 64,400, is home to 26,400 Muslims; Ceuta’s Muslims number 27,000 out of a population of 71,500. The Spanish newspaper *El Pais* reports that Muslims will become the majority in the next decade.

Demographics, however, don’t pose the only threat to Spain’s future. This month 11 Islamist radicals, ten Spaniards and a Moroccan, were [arrested](#) in Ceuta for planning to stage terrorist attacks in the country. (Two of the brothers of [Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed](#), the one-time Guantanamo prisoner who was eventually exonerated by a Spanish court, were among those arrested.) The seven suspects later detained by Judge Baltasar Garzon were charged with belonging to the Salafia Yihadia terrorist group which forms part of the al-Qaeda network in North Africa. In a statement Garzon said that the group had considered stealing weapons and explosives from a military base and carrying out an attack during Ceuta's annual fiesta. Sources claim that at least one member had already written a suicide note. The investigation of the group which began in March of 2005 also revealed that the individuals detained were in contact with two Spanish soldiers of Moroccan origin from whom they hoped to obtain explosives and strategic information.

While the revelation of the terrorists’ plans was shocking, the fact that such planning took place in the border town of Principe Alfonso was not surprising in the least. The fact is that Principe has become a veritable caldron of Islamic extremism over the years. In their paper titled “[Favorable](#)

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situations for the jihadist recruitment: The neighborhood of Principe Alfonso (Ceuta, Spain),” Drs. Javier Jordan and Humberto Trujillo of the University of Granada detail the full extent of jihadist activity in the town.

Resembling the combustible suburbs of Paris, Principe is basically off-limits to the National Police and Guardia Civil except in emergency situations or raids because of the risk officers face when entering the town. Recently the local police office and its lone police car were burned. Not only are ambushes of police cars common in Principe, but emergency calls are frequently made in order to trap police officers. The resulting chaos has led to a situation where even the city buses can't run safely.

The only authority in Principe comes from Islamic extremists who are intent on imposing their Salafist interpretation of Islamic law. For example, boys are routinely castigated for playing games with girls on the street. Jordan and Trujillo suspect that ‘moral squads’ which intimidate or attack girls who don't wear the veil or men who drink alcohol in public may already exist.

Many Muslims in Principe blame its poverty on the Catholic dominion of the city. Such rhetoric incites hatred for Spain and its Catholic traditions and helps explain why shouts referring to the ‘Intifada of Ceuta’ are often heard during the ambushes of police cars.

It might be easier to conclude that this disturbing scenario is inevitable in a ghetto close to Morocco's border—but unlikely in the rest of Spain—if the quest to reconquer all of historic Al-Ándalus were not continuing full-speed ahead. Not willing to accept the bargain that the Spanish electorate thought they were making by electing the appeasing Socialists to power in the aftermath of the Madrid bombings, Islamists remain determined to attack the entire country. Since 2004 at least eight terrorist attacks have been thwarted, while in 2006 alone there have been more than 50 terrorism related arrests. And now Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who assured voters that the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq would make their country safer, must explain to his countrymen why another group of fighters from Iraq are back in Spain.

A story appearing this month in the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* reported that jihadists who gained combat experience in Iraq are returning to Spain to prepare attacks in Europe. In Iraq these holy warriors worked with the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the one-time al Qaeda leader in Iraq and a central figure in the Madrid bombings. Mariano Simancas, deputy director of Europol, issued this warning: “They are the new Trojan horse of Al Qaeda and its satellites on our territory and they are already preparing themselves.”

The question is whether Spaniards are preparing themselves for the inevitable struggle against Islamic extremism that faces them. Years of looking the other way while terrorists attacked Israel definitely haven't helped prepare them for the fight ahead. Spaniards could do worse than heed the words of

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former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, who warned that if by any chance Israel were to fall and be defeated, the next in line would definitely be Spain.

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