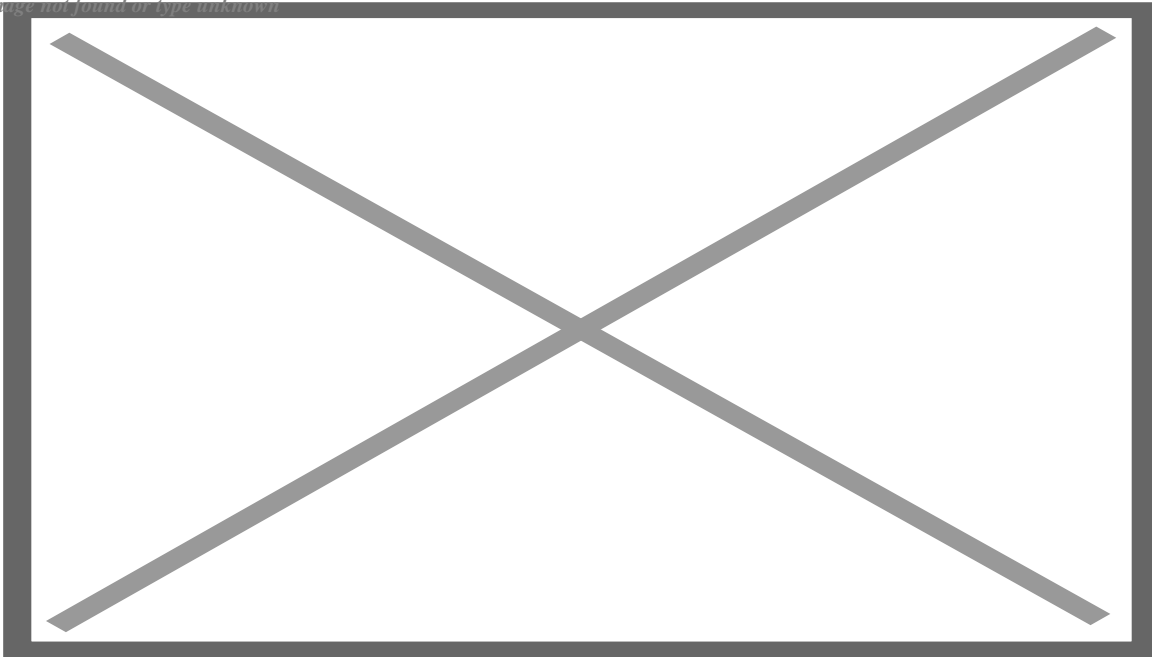


# *General elections underway in Spain*

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Madrid, July 23 (RHC)-- Polls opened at 07:00 GMT in potentially close-run general elections marked by ideological differences and the prospect of the first far-right party in government since Francisco Franco's dictatorship ended in the 1970s.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez from the Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) will go head to head with the right-wing People's Party leader, Alberto Nunez Feijoo.

Al Jazeera's Sonia Gallego, reporting from Madrid, said Prime Minister Sanchez has been promoting a "very strong, very positive campaign". "It's been a bitterly fought campaign between the main socialist party and the centre-right People's Party [PP] as well and various other smaller parties as well.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been pitching this as a choice between what he says is the progressive vision of his party versus the forces of reactionary conservatives," Gallego said. She added that Sanchez has been making the point that the PP has already gone into coalitions with the far-right Vox party in regional governments, hoping to galvanise those undecided into voting for his socialist party.

Spanish voter, Alejandro Bledam told The Associated Press that the election is reflective of how divided the country is. "Given the polarisation in this country, it's to vote either for 50 years of backwardness or for progress," he said. While he did not say who he voted for, he indicated that he was backing the leftist

parties.

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