

Spain recalls ambassador as spat with Argentina's Milei extends

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Argentina's President Javier Milei speaks during a rally organized by the Spanish far-right Vox party ahead of the European elections, in Madrid, Spain, May 19, 2024 [Ana Beltran/Reuters]

Madrid, May 20 (RHC)-- Spain has recalled its ambassador to Buenos Aires after Argentinian President Javier Milei used an appearance in Madrid to make derogatory comments about the Spanish prime

minister's wife.

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares on Monday demanded that the Argentinian leader issue an apology for his comments. The accusations of corruption against Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's wife Begona Gomez extend a crude and very public spat between the far-right Milei and the left-leaning Spanish government.

"I am going to explain to him the gravity of the situation and I am going to demand again a public apology by Javier Milei," Albares told Cadena SER radio.

Addressing a rally in Madrid organized by the far-right Vox party and attended by many of its international allies, including Italy's Giorgia Meloni and France's Marine Le Pen, on Sunday, Milei referred to a "corrupt woman." While he did not name Gomez, his meaning was clear.

"The global elites don't realize how destructive it can be to implement the ideas of socialism... even if you have a corrupt wife, let's say, it gets dirty, and you take five days to think about it," Milei said.

Sanchez spent five days last month mulling his future after a court opened a preliminary probe into his wife for suspected influence peddling and corruption. Sanchez dismissed the allegations against Gomez as part of a campaign of political harassment by right-wing forces.

Milei's comments did not come out of the blue. Argentina and Spain have had diplomatic daggers drawn, trading jibes over drug use and economic and social policy in the weeks ahead of a visit to the Spanish capital by the self-described "anarcho-capitalist" president.

"With his behaviour, Milei has brought the relationship between Spain and Argentina to its most serious state in recent history," Albares said in a video statement. The foreign minister added that he would not exclude the rupture of diplomatic ties with Argentina if no apology were made. "We clearly do not want to take these measures but if there is no public apology, we will do it," he said.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, also commented on Milei's insult and said on Sunday that "attacks against family members of political leaders have no place in our culture."

But Milei's spokesperson said the Argentinian leader would not apologise, saying Spanish officials should retract insults they have made against him.

Milei, who began his visit to Spain on Friday, broke diplomatic protocol by refusing to meet Spain's King Felipe VI and Sanchez. Instead, he preferred to promote his book alongside Vox leader Santiago Abascal at a party rally.

On his first day in Spain, Milei denounced what he called "satanic" socialism. "Let us not let the dark, black, satanic, atrocious, horrible carcinogenic side that is socialism prevail over us," he said in a talk about his books on libertarian ideas.

But on X, Sanchez said the "international far-right" was meeting in Madrid "because Spain represents what they hate: feminism, social justice, labour dignity."

The left-leaning Spaniard and far-right Argentine have never got along. Sanchez supported Sergio Massa in the election that brought Milei to power in December. He has also not contacted Milei since his victory.

The Argentinian president has, meanwhile, publicly supported the ultra-right political party Vox.

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