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PP corruption cases set to hinder negotiations with Ciudadanos

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A day after emerging party Ciudadanos [offered to mediate between Spain's two main groups](#) to break the stalemate and get a government up and running, fresh scandals affecting the Popular Party (PP) are making potential deals increasingly difficult. On Tuesday alone, the PP conservatives were dealt several new blows: [24 people were arrested in the Valencia region](#) in connection with a bribes-for-contracts investigation; former government official [Rodrigo Rato](#) became embroiled in a new probe, and former minister Miguel Arias Cañete, now an EU commissioner, is under scrutiny over a corruption scandal at a state agency called Acuamed.

And last Friday, both the PP as a whole and its treasurer were named official targets in an ongoing investigation into possible illegal party financing called [the Bárcenas case](#).

With the conservatives making headlines again, other parties rushed to condemn the corruption.

“The PP is rotten to the core with corruption,” said Oscar López of the Socialist Party (PSOE), which came in second at [the inconclusive December 20](#) general election. “If anyone thinks they can pressure the PSOE into supporting Spain’s most corrupt party, either actively or passively, so it can govern again, they are wrong.”

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Íñigo Errejón, the number two official at Podemos, said the Valencia arrests affected ongoing talks to form a government in Spain, either through a coalition or a minority administration.

“Nobody who talks about regeneration should allow the PP to have another term in La Moncloa [prime ministerial palace],” he said, alluding to the Socialists but particularly to Ciudadanos, which secured 40 seats in parliament on a program of democratic reform of Spain’s institutions.

While the PP originally described Ciudadanos as “a marketing product” and “a high-risk vote,” it has recently been courting its leader Albert Rivera, whose can-do attitude is now being described as “constructive.”

But the latter is warning that a deal between both parties will be difficult, particularly with Mariano Rajoy still at the helm of the PP.

“It’s going to be complicated for Rajoy – who has been heading the PP all these years, who is involved in the Bárcenas case, and whose party is sitting in the dock over its management – to be able to handle this kind of fight against corruption, and above all, it’s going to be very hard for him to have the authority for it,” noted Rivera on Tuesday in an interview on ES Radio.

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Any talks with the PP will include a raft of anti-corruption measures that the latter will have to accept; these will possibly include eliminating government pardons for convicted politicians and holding parties accountable for their own members’ crimes.

“Spain is no longer afraid of the notion that if Rajoy is not in charge, the ship will sink,” added Rivera.

But so far Rajoy is showing no signs of wanting to step aside and make room for a different candidate for prime minister. Despite [winning the most seats at the election](#) – 123 – Rajoy lacks enough support to get himself reinstated at the upcoming investiture session. Aware of this, on Friday [he told King Felipe VI](#) that he would not stand for the position at that session.

Meanwhile, Socialist leader Pedro Sánchez, whose party has 90 seats, is attempting to create [an alternative alliance with Podemos](#) and regional groups, but talks with the anti-austerity party have been stalling.

If no candidate manages enough congressional support to form a government, Spain will be forced to hold fresh elections later this year.

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