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Spain's euthanasia debate rekindled before election with husband's arrest

Madrid.—The arrest of a 69-year-old Spaniard on homicide charges after he helped his terminally ill wife end her life has reignited a divisive debate on euthanasia, raising its profile as a campaign issue three weeks before a national election.

The economy has tended to dominate previous Spanish elections but social topics have taken precedence in the run-up to the ballot on April 28, with women's rights and national identity also high

on politicians' agendas. Angel Hernandez turned himself in to authorities on Wednesday, becoming an unwitting vehicle for political points-scoring in the process after, he said, giving Maria Jose Carrasco, 61, a fatal dose of barbiturates.

He was freed the next day to await trial and faces two to 10 years in jail if convicted.

A survey in 2017 showed 84 percent of Spaniards support euthanasia, and the head of a centre-right party said four

days after Hernandez's arrest that it would end its opposition to a euthanasia law.

But significant pockets of resistance remain in the traditionally Catholic country, and both the conservative Popular Party (PP) and far-right Vox continue to oppose its decriminalisation.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told a pre-campaign rally on Sunday that, if he got parliamentary majority "euthanasia will be recognised as a right".

MAY'S PLEA

PM ASKS FOR BREXIT EXTENSION: P20

Left-wing coalition for Spain: poll

Madrid.—Spain's left-wing parties could win a majority in elections on April 28, although that is not guaranteed, while right-wing parties look set to fall short under any scenario, according to an opinion poll yesterday.

Spain is facing one of its most bitterly fought parliamentary elections in decades, and polls have been suggesting for weeks that the result is too close to call.

The state-run Centre for Sociological Studies (CIS) is forecasting a wide range of 157-181 seats for the ruling Socialists together with the anti-austerity Podemos and smaller left-wing allies.

Under the best-case scenario, they would together secure a majority in the 350-seat parliament.

But they might not be able to rule on their own and would have to seek allies among regional parties in Catalonia or the Basque country, a difficult undertaking that would require lengthy talks.

The election is expected to mark a watershed in Spain's democratic history as a far-right party looks set to win seats for the first time in four decades.

The CIS poll, the last before the election, sees that party, Vox, gaining 29 to 37 seats.

The conservative People's Party is seen getting 66-76 seats and the centre-right Ciudadanos 42-51.

This means that the poll does not see the three right-wing parties winning a majority of seats, even under the most optimistic scenario.

A Ciudadanos-Socialist alliance would theoretically get a majority, but Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera has ruled out such a pact.

The poll also indicated that one in four voters had not yet decided who to vote for, and more than eight percent gave no answer, showing that things could still change.

Spanish pollsters have traditionally struggled to predict seats for smaller or new parties such as Vox, and they disagree on what the outcome will be. <https://tmsnrt.rs/2E-Nugtw>

CIS polled 16,194 people from March 1-18, after Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called the snap election.

The poll shows important changes in seats for most parties.



Prime Minister Theresa May held talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel.