

Open letter on political repression in Catalonia

We are academics working in the in the fields of political science, law, economics, human rights, sociology, history and related subjects in the United States, Canada and Mexico. We write to draw attention to the political repression that is being conducted by the Spanish government and national police to prevent the Catalanian government holding a referendum on independence on 1st October. As the referendum draws closer, the political repression is intensifying. The Spanish government has stated that it will physically prevent people entering polling booths to vote on 1st October and has threatened to arrest Catalan Premier Carles Puigdemont and more than 750 Mayors of Catalanian town councils for making public premises available for the referendum. Other repressive measures include the following:

- The Spanish Cabinet has unilaterally taken control of the payment of Catalonia's creditors to prevent any expenditure relating to the organization of the October 1st referendum.
- The Guardia Civil (the Spanish military police force) has closed down websites that provide information or commentary on the referendum. Spanish judges have ordered the main telecommunications companies - Vodafone and Movistar - to prevent access to the referendum website ref1oct.eu. They complied.
- The Guardia Civil has raided printers and distributors in the greater Barcelona region and has confiscated 1.3 million posters and leaflets.
- The Guardia Civil has served an injunction against all pro-independence newspapers and web-based news offices to ban publication of any material related to the referendum.
- The Spanish Post Office has opened 'suspicious' mail to check if it contains referendum-related material.
- Meetings in public buildings have been banned and some have been raided and stopped by the police.

The European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker has said that Europe would accept an independent Catalonia if that was the result of a properly conducted referendum. The Spanish government's repressive measures are intended to disrupt the conduct of the referendum.

We support the demands by constitutional lawyers in Catalonia and Spain to cease all action disrupting the referendum, since Section 155 of the Spanish Constitution states that the Spanish government can only compel an Autonomous Community (state or regional government) to carry out legal actions with the prior consent of a majority of the Senate (the Spanish upper house). No such vote has taken place.

We are concerned that the level of political repression in Catalonia at the moment is of a severe and arbitrary character not experienced since the Franco dictatorship. We demand that Spain immediately ceases the political repression in Catalonia and enables the people of Catalonia to be allowed to freely express their political views.

Signed,

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