

Protest against violation of democratic rights in Europe

The draconian prison sentences, announced against nine prominent and democratically elected Catalan leaders, gravely undermine the foundation of the European values system. Freedom of speech, associations and expressing beliefs, especially through a referendum as one of the widest and most legitimate democratic forums, are freedoms that were denied value in the EU by the Spanish supreme court.

Having political prisoners on EU soil is an outrage! Punishment of European citizens merely over peaceful and democratic fighting for personal and collective rights is unacceptable! Nine Catalan leaders who led the peaceful, democratic vote of the Catalans on the future of the Catalan nation have been detained for two years in prison. A number of law experts from around the world have assessed this case as a case of political prisoners. Also according to the criteria of the Council of Europe (Resolution 1900 of 2012), these Catalan politicians and civil society leaders are political prisoners. We reasonably expect that a similar position will be adopted by the UN Special Investigation Team. After two years in custody, these leaders are now sentenced to a total of 100 years in prison.

The Madrid-Barcelona relation crisis is not just Spain's internal political issue. It is a short-sighted belief that this crisis can be resolved by repression, intimidation, imprisonment and incitement to hostility. Violence always begets violence. This crisis can only be resolved through open dialogue, democratic political means, reason and responsibility of all parties involved.

To remain silent over the violations of the fundamental rights of the nine prominent Catalan leaders and many others who are also being persecuted for participating in the 2017 referendum, is to take responsibility for their fate and also supports an overthrow of European democratic principles. We do not want this and can certainly not agree to this. We believe that many European citizens will join our protest.

At the same time we expect that all European parliaments and governments, all EU institutions, the European Parliament, the Commission and the European Council will not remain silent in the face of severe violations of the fundamental rights of Catalan political prisoners and also of the fundamental European values in Spain. Human rights are universally applicable and are above the internal law of every sovereign state.

The supporting Board of the Catalan political prisoners in Spain