

# Solidarity for Activists in Catalonia Accused of Terrorism

**We, the undersigned civil society organisations, express our urgent concerns regarding the restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly in Spain and call on the authorities to protect fundamental freedoms. Recent restrictive incidents against Catalan activists accusing them of terrorism undermine the country's commitments to international human rights standards and European Union Law.**

In November 2023, after 4 years of judicial investigation veiled in secrecy, the Spanish National Court announced that 12 people are under investigation for terrorism in connection with their alleged participation in the activities of the Tsunami Democratic movement. The actions considered as "terrorism" relate to peoples' mobilisation and protests in 2019 in areas such as the [Barcelona-Prat airport](#) and [La Jonquera](#) in Catalonia, the latter being inspired by the 2019–2020 [Hong Kong](#) protests for democracy. People protested against the Spanish Supreme Court's [conviction](#) of the Catalan independence leaders to prison terms ranging from nine to thirteen years for organised actions linked to the Independence of Catalonia between September and October 2017. The [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions](#) and the [Council of Europe](#) had already asked for the release of the leaders, and numerous Spanish and international human rights organisations had expressed [concern](#) over their imprisonment and the sentence, such as [Amnesty International](#), [Front Line Defenders](#) and the [World Organisation Against Torture](#). [International observers of the trial](#) had pointed out what they consider as a number of irregularities in the process that lead to suspects of politicisation of the trial.

Freedom of assembly, including the right to organise peaceful protests, is recognised and protected by [international](#), [EU](#) and [national](#) law. According to [international law](#) peaceful assemblies can in some cases be inherently or deliberately disruptive and require a significant degree of toleration. Hence, collective non-violent civil disobedience and direct-action campaigns are covered by the freedom of assembly. The recent accusations and investigations not only contravene these international human rights standards but also create a chilling effect on civic engagement. Furthermore, over the past decade, in most European countries, anti-terrorist legislation has been amended to broaden the definition of terrorism, including legal expressions of dissent, such as non-violent protests. The misuse of the accusation of terrorism is unjustifiable, since it is based in a framework of criminal exceptionalism, which is contrary to the principles established under the rule of law.

These investigations are not isolated incidents but part of a wider trend of restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly and right to protest. In recent years, [Spain](#) and several other European countries, such as [France](#), [the UK](#) and [Italy](#), have passed legislation restricting the right to peaceful assembly and toughening sanctions related to assemblies. Several [human rights organisations](#) and international institutions, including the [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#), [the](#)

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[Council of Europe](#) and the [OSCE](#), have raised concerns about the developments in Europe with regards to shrinking civic space. [The 2023 report](#) by the CIVICUS Monitor, rating the state of civic space globally, reports that the overall country ratings in the region have worsened. According to the report, intimidation, detention of protesters and disruption of protests were among the [top five violations in Europe](#). Moreover, people expressing their fundamental rights of assembly face violations such as restrictive laws, police violence, preventive detention, harsher penalties and increased surveillance.

The right to peaceful assembly is a cornerstone of democratic societies, enshrined in both national, European and international law. It is a fundamental right that allows people to express their opinions and engage in public discourse without fear of repression. This is why the decision taken by the Spanish Court to refer 12 people for trial on terrorism charges because of their alleged participation in the Tsunami movement does not only undermine the international human rights and democratic standards that we collectively uphold, but also has a chilling effect on civic engagement, silencing the vibrant diversity of voices that form the foundation of a rights-based society. In solidarity with the Catalan individuals facing the accusations, we call for the immediate dropping of the charges of terrorism. State authorities have a duty to protect and facilitate fundamental rights, not stifle them.

### **Initiated by:**

European Civic Forum (ECF)

### **Signed by:**

Alternative Informatics Association / Alternatif Bilişim, Turkey (AiA)

Amnesty International

Arci - Italy

Aspiration

CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Civil Society Advocates

Civil society initiative Glas ljudstva

European Democratic Lawyers / Avocat.es Européen.nes Démocrates (AED)

European House Budapest

European Language Equality Network (ELEN)

European Sex Workers Rights Alliance

Headquarters of the movement (HOTM)

Ligue des droits de l'Homme (LDH)

Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol)

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No Somos Delito

PIC - Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment

Statewatch

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)