



RESOLUTION ON THE DETERIORATION OF DEMOCRACY AND ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SPAIN

Since the passing of the so-called "Gag Law", approved in December 2014 and effective as of July 2015, a serious and alarming deterioration of the citizens' rights has been observed throughout Spain, due to the effective changes that the law has established in the penal code. Actions that previously were considered summary offences or misdemeanours are now considered serious crimes, with fines of up to 600,000 Euros and / or prison sentences.

In these just two years since its application, there have been a large number of denunciations and arrests of artists, writers, journalists, tweeters, bloggers, etc. This means the criminalization of protest, criticism and dissent. In short, summary offences or misdemeanours such as drawing graffiti, the lyrics of a song or a poem can be prosecuted as crimes of terrorism or arms trafficking. It has to be highlighted that critics that express a point of view ideologically different to the one of the right-wing government of the Popular Party, were increasingly penalized. This last week has been a siege on freedom of expression, especially after the call for a referendum in Catalonia, declared illegal by the Spanish Constitutional Court.

Due to these events we are deeply concerned about the violation of the most basic democratic rights, such as the constant threats to and denunciations of journalists, publishers, printers, media, and most recently, not least of autonomous and local politicians, through actions including material searches, indiscriminate inspections of companies, random identifications in the street, closing of web pages, suppression of the right of expression with the prohibition of public acts in Madrid, Gijon, Vitoria-Gasteiz and all over Catalonia.

All of these actions are the result of the use of the justice system for political purposes, which represents a distortion of public institutions and a loss of credibility of the government.

The Assembly of delegates of the International PEN, in the face of this situation, calls on the authorities of the Spanish Government:

- To end the repression of freedom of expression and to guarantee the fundamental rights of citizens and to respect the obligations contracted as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).