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Spain accused of ‘criminalising dissent’

EFA MEPs supporting Catalan academics

Spanish authorities have been accused of *‘criminalising dissent’* after it emerged that supporters of Catalan self-determination are facing legal action and other measures simply for supporting a peaceful referendum.

The issue was raised at a meeting of the EU - Catalonia Dialogue Platform at the European Parliament in Brussels this week. The platform is a cross party forum for MEPs who support dialogue between Spain and Catalonia to resolve the question of Catalan self-determination.

EFA MEPs **Diana Riba**, **François Alfonsi** and Tatjana Ždanoka supported the initiative.

Representatives of the Catalan organisation *‘Universities for Civil Rights’* had travelled to Brussels to present their joint manifesto which rejects the harsh and disproportionate sentences given to Catalan political prisoners who supported a peaceful and democratic path towards Catalan self-determination.

The manifesto is supported by Catalonia’s university community.



Josep Pagès, professor of Constitutional Law at the UAB Autonomous University of Barcelona and a former representative of a body that dealt with the Catalan independence referendum came to Brussels to share his experiences. Although he'd already resigned from the *'Sindicatura Electoral'* before the referendum took place, members of the electoral body, including academics, are now facing prosecution for alleged crimes such as 'disobedience'.

EFA MEP **Diana Riba** commented:

'We are increasingly witnessing the criminalisation of dissent in Spain.

'Not content with making political prisoners out of Catalan politicians who advocated a peaceful and democratic self-determination process, Spanish authorities are now persecuting the academic community and civil society out of pure spite and vengeance.

'We are talking about people such as University professors who supported a democratic self-determination process, and community activists who did the same, now being pursued through the courts.

'Spain's continuing slide backwards to authoritarianism should be a matter of grave concern for the whole European Union, because if we allow it to happen in Spain, then it is only a matter of time before other authoritarian leaders will take advantage of the EU's indifference.'

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Responsible MEPs



François Alfonsi

Member



Diana Riba i Giner

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

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