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EU must defend freedom of expression in Spain

Press release from EFA MEP J-M Terricabras (Catalunya)

Catalan MEP **Josep-Maria Terricabras** has called upon the European Commission to defend the right to freedom of expression in Spain and to mediate with the Spanish Government in respect of Catalonia's forthcoming referendum on independence.

He addressed his remarks directly to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, during today's debate in the European Parliament following the annual 'State of the Union' speech.

Josep-Maria Terricabras is President of the European Free Alliance Group in the European Parliament and Vice President of the Greens/EFA group.

The Catalan Parliament, with a mandate from the electorate, has voted by absolute majority to hold a referendum on independence on 1 October 2017. But the Spanish government refuses to engage in a dialogue and is attempting to impede the Catalan people's right to democratically decide their own future.

Terricabras called upon the commission to mediate in the situation and to defend the right to freedom of expression.

Speaking in the debate, **Josep-Maria Terricabras** said:

"Mr Juncker, hundreds of thousands of Catalans repeatedly called for a referendum on self-determination, as happened in Scotland.

"Yet, the Government of Spain has never even wanted to talk about it.

"The Parliament of Catalonia voted in favour of the referendum law by absolute majority.

"But, as if voting were a crime, the Government of Spain has reacted by taking legal action against the Parliament of Catalonia and parliamentarians, and by issuing threats against the government and more than a thousand public officials and the Catalan media that they should not speak or act in favour of the referendum.

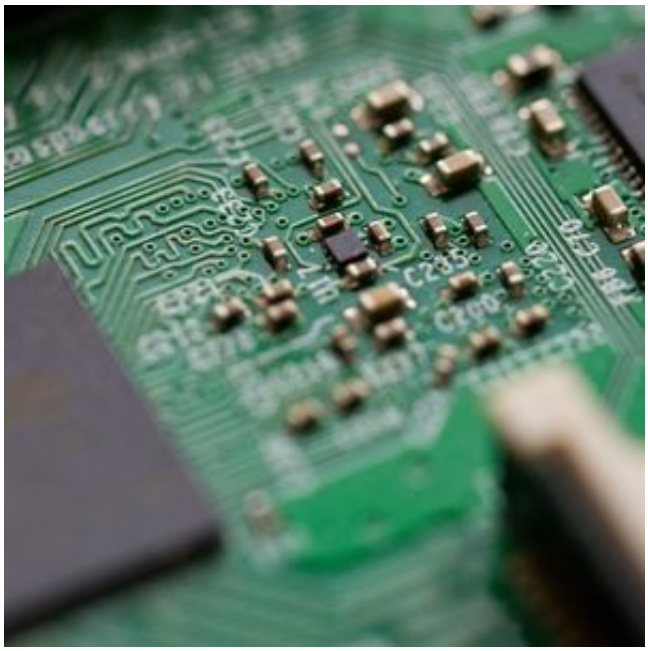
"These are clear and unacceptable attacks on freedom of expression.

"I'm not asking the Commission to take a view on Catalan independence, this is a matter for Catalans. But yes, I would ask you to mediate with the Government of Spain in favour of an agreement on the referendum. And I ask you: why does the Commission not intervene to defend freedom of expression in Spain? In other countries it surely would."

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Josep Maria Terricabras

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

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