

Pro Basque Language Civil Society (not listed)

Good afternoon.

I represent a broad minority of Euzkadi a pro Basque organized civil language society. Today, the Basque language community is built as a minority within its own territory. Indeed, quantitatively we are a minority, but I wish to point out that the fact of us being a minority in our town is a product of a brutal process of linguistic assimilation. Processes to which our language community has been subjected throughout history.

In our opinion, the most interesting advance presented by the Declaration is the fact that it transcends the principle of non-discrimination asserting the need to adopt measures that support and promote a given minority. From this perspective, it is valid to talk about the recognition of the collective rights of minorities in connection of prospecting their identity or existence as a human group.

That of course, is the theoretical dimension, but now, let us examine the real effect of the Declaration. Part of our language community is situated on French territory where because there is no recognition of collective rights, our language community – just as the Breton, Occitan, Catalan, Corsican, and other communities – have no right. Indeed, the position of the French state is completely opposed to the very spirit of the Declaration. So for example, the French state maintains a qualification of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulating that there are no minorities in the French state. From this odious posture it may be concluded that the Declaration which we are studying today is not existing in France.

The former independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall visited France in 2007 and she proposed to the government of France to recognise the existence of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Also the Committee of Economic and Social Rights of the United Nations reiterated the recommendation done in 2001 to the French state to point out the observations of the Articles 27 and 30. But the French state hasn't done anything.

Now let me add a couple of observations on the Spanish state. In recent times the Spanish state has been put by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on National Minorities to reconsider its refusal to apply the Charter to the Basque, Catalan and Galician communities. In illustration I would like to single out the fact that in Navarra, which is a territory where Basque is spoken, recognition of the right of Navarrese citizens to speak their own language depends on where exactly within the territory they live. Consequently, 1400 girls and boys are now forced to travel of 5 million kilometres every year in order to be able to go to a school in Basque language. This happens in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We want to LIVE in capital letters and not as second class citizens. For us, to live with dignity is to live with the Basque language. We therefore use this forum, the independent expert and this institution to act in to put in place effective processes and protocols to ensure the implementation of the principles of the Declaration.

Thank you very much.

