

United Nations Forum on Minority Issues – Fourteenth session

Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of Minorities

2-3 December 2021

Item 4: Focusing on the rights of minorities and effective early prevention of conflicts

Intervention of the Catalan National Assembly (Civil Society Organization)

Thank you, Mr. Moderator,

My name is Barbara Roviró, and I speak on behalf of the Catalan National Assembly, a grass-roots organization defending the right to self-determination of the Catalan people.

Situations where there is systematic denial of the rights of minorities, and therefore potential conflict, is not something exclusive of non-Western states with non-democratic values.

This is the case of Spanish authorities, who during the last decade have been carrying out a policy of recentralization of powers. The Catalan national minority is seeing its culture and language attacked and discriminated against once again, and its model of language immersion in education is under threat. Last week, the Spanish Supreme Court approved a ruling forcing Catalan schools to ensure 25% of lesson hours are taught in Spanish language, attacking a model of education that is supported by 82% of Catalans, and by the whole educational community. This ruling goes also against the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), and infringed the recommendations made by Special Rapporteur Fernand de Varennes in his 2020 report.

Concerning civil and political rights, Spain's systematic campaign of repression against Catalan activists and public representatives has been denounced by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Council of Europe, among others. However, the recommendations given by these international organizations have been to a great extent ignored by the Spanish authorities, as hundreds are still suffering the consequences of lawfare.

The fact that Spain, an EU member, disregards recommendations and mechanisms proposed by international instances to deescalate the conflict and respect Catalan minority rights, has not gone unnoticed by authoritarian states in other parts of the world, like China or Turkey, who have used this case to justify their repressive actions, therefore setting a dangerous precedent.

For all these reasons, the Catalan National Assembly calls on UN authorities to take measures to make sure that Spanish authorities stop their political persecution against Catalan political representatives and activists, and respect the fundamental rights of the Catalan people, including its legitimate right to self-determination.