

Speaker: Thank you, my name is [?] and I speak on behalf of the Catalan National Assembly, a grassroots organization defending the right of self-determination of the Catalan people.

Human rights defenders are key players of promoting and protecting the principles of the UN Declaration on minority rights. Sadly, the admirable work does not come without its risks. Minority rights defenders tend to be individuals and groups from the very minorities that are under threat. They have been facing attacks and repression all over the world, but those are not limited to authoritarian regimes. In the so-called full democracies, there have also been attacks against human rights defenders, as in the case of Spain, against the peaceful and democratic Catalan pro-independence movement. During the 2017 referendum, the Spanish police violently attacked voters, removed elected officials from office, jailed peaceful activists, and illegally spied on them, their friends and families and even their lawyers using Pegasus spyware. Thousands of Catalan activists that denounced these actions are now facing prison sentences themselves. Despite having been [denounced?] by the UN, the Council of Europe, Amnesty International and others, the Spanish state has coaxed the EU into continuing to treat the Catalan case as a purely domestic affair. But the [contested?] repression is already encouraging others such as Turkey, China and Russia, that are using Spain as an example of how to crush their minorities and political dissidents with impunity. Also the EU's credibility may end up irretrievably damaged, [as] lecturing on minority rights abroad while accepting violations within a Member State [were] likely to be viewed as hypocritical and insincere. The Catalan National Assembly calls on the UN authorities to immediately establish talks with the EU, expressing our concern regarding violations of minority rights and the negative impact that holding double standards may have globally.