

## **UN Forum On Minority Issues**

### **30 November – 1 December 2023**

#### **Session 2: Socio-Economic Empowerment Discussion areas**

#### **Statement of the Catalan National Assembly (Civil Society Organization)**

My name is Bàrbara 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.

Promoting democratic and respectful public debate is a fundamental aspect of egalitarian systems and frameworks, seeking to amplify social participation of people belonging to minority groups and boost equal opportunities in society and enjoyment of civil, political and economic rights.

Unfortunately, when it comes to Spain, since the 2017 Catalan independence referendum political persecution has been accompanied by a public debate that seeks to stigmatize the Catalan national minority, with mass media as one of its main vehicles, and also increasing through social media. Spanish mass media has become an extension of the State's interests, instead of pursuing investigative journalism. Accusations against pro-independence politicians and activists are not only made in the courts but in smear campaigns in the press arising from leaks by the police.

The legacy of Franco's authoritarian policies and culture in Spanish institutions still profoundly affect Catalan society with stigmatization of the teaching and use of the Catalan language, and considering the Catalans a disloyal people who have betrayed the common project of Spanish State-building is a recurrent theme. Most Spanish political parties use catalanophobia as an electoral tool and the mass media has become an extension of their political campaigns.

Growing tendencies of hate speech and intolerance against Catalans and the Catalan language reinforce political hostility, repression and criminalization. They also serve to consolidate an alarming structural discrimination against the rights of the Catalan people by Spanish authorities and many social and political actors that have deep historical roots.

For all these reasons, the Catalan National Assembly calls on the UN competent authorities to take measures to make sure that Spanish authorities comply with international standards and obligations in protecting the rights of the Catalan minority from hate and catalanophobia. Finally, we also vindicate the right to self-determination as the only valid and effective instrument to overcome structural and historical discrimination against the rights of the Catalan people by Spanish authorities.