



### **ELEN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2017**

### **Acció Cultural del País Valencià RESOLUTION ON THE IMPRISONMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE CATALAN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS**

**Proposed by Acció Cultural del País Valencià (ACPV)**

**Saturday 11th November, Valencia**

**Voting result: Passed unanimously**

The Board of Directors of Acció Cultural del País Valencià (ACPV), following the imprisonment of the presidents of Òmnium Cultural and of the National Assembly of Catalonia (ANC), and of the Vice-President and seven Ministers of the Government of Catalonia, proposes the following resolution to the ELEN General Assembly.

First, the preventive imprisonment of the Presidents of Òmnium Cultural and of the ANC and of the Vice-President and seven Ministers of the Government of Catalonia is a serious political error. The current situation in Catalonia has its roots in a political conflict, of an extraordinary dimension: between two and three million Catalan citizens are in favour of the independence project, and it seems that the repeated refusal on the part of the Spanish Government to open any kind of dialogue or negotiation for several years has only resulted in the constant increase in support for independence. The suspension of autonomy and the preventive imprisonment of the main social leaders of this movement, and more than half of a democratically elected Government, will not

achieve a different result and will continue to fuel the conflict.

We want to emphasize that this is a majority opinion among the political and social actors in the Valencian Country. The President of the Generalitat and the President of the Parliament (Corts valencianes), among others, have stated that imprisonment is not an appropriate measure to solve the conflict.

Secondly, we are alarmed by the attempt to equate criticism of the implementation of Article 155 and of the preventive imprisonment of social leaders and elected politicians, with pro-independence positions. The Spanish Government and the parties that support it, PP and Cs (with the support of certain media), are promoting a media campaign oriented to criminalize any criticism of their actions. It is an attempt to reduce reality to the dynamic of friend versus foe, a tactic used by some theorists of the extreme right. It is a falsehood to say "who is not with me is against me," or that there are only two possibilities regarding the situation in Catalonia: either that of the Spanish Government with the enforcement of Article 155 and the imprisonment of civil rights leaders and elected officials, or that of being in favour of independence.

Democracy means the possibility to criticise the power and to enjoy plurality and nuance. ACPV is a Valencian cultural association and, therefore, it is not part of the Catalan pro-independence movement. ACPV, though, dearly holds strong democratic values and, therefore, we are deeply alarmed by the attempt to equate criticism with being an enemy, and the habit of responding to criticism with disqualification, threat and insult. This is an utterly dangerous dynamic for a democracy.

Third, Acció Cultural del País Valencià insists on dialogue as the only possible way to conduct politics in a democracy. It is a fact that if the Spanish Government had opted for dialogue years ago, when a reform of the Statute or a fiscal pact was on the table, the current situation would not have been reached. We are not ourselves, a Valencian cultural association, the ones who must point out the solution, for the simple reason that it is not our mission. But we understand that it is our duty to say out loud that the situation will not be solved by normalizing the suspension of self-government, with preventive imprisonment, or with the systematic disqualification of democratic criticism. Furthermore, this triple dynamic contains worrying elements regarding the potential erosion of democracy beyond Catalonia, as well as a move away from positive

political discourse.

Fourth, ACPV understands that the Spanish Government's strategy is part of a political drive towards re-centralization that not only affects Catalonia but also the Valencian Country, and may also affect the other autonomous communities in the State. In this sense, we know that it is no coincidence that in the current Valencian legislature the Spanish Government has taken to the Constitutional Court several laws passed by the Valencian Parliament in relation to education, housing, dependence, health, linguistic rights, etc. This repressive attitude, towards a protected autonomy, will result in nothing more than an increase in conflict and a reduction in the quality of life and self-government of the Valencian citizens.

Therefore, ACPV, calls for:

- The release of the Presidents of *Omnium Cultural* and of the ANC and the Vice President and the seven Ministers preventively imprisoned,
- The opening of a process of dialogue between the Spanish and the Catalan Governments, about which ACPV makes no comment on content, conditions, or calendars.

Otherwise, the situation will only worsen, with very damaging effects not only for Catalonia but for the whole of Spain.

Acció Cultural del País Valencià will send this statement to the General Assembly of ELEN (that represents 45 lesser-used languages with 150 member organisations in 23 European states) that will take place this Saturday, November 11th in Valencia, at the headquarters of our association, in the *Octubre Centre de Cultura Contemporània*. The Assembly will be co-chaired by Ferran Suay, member of the Board of Directors of Cultural Action of the Valencian Country (ACPV) and current President of ELEN. Also participating will be the President of ACPV, the writer Joan F. Mira.

Acció Cultural del País Valencià proposes the approval of this resolution to the General Assembly of ELEN, as well as to the ELEN membership (that gathers hundreds of thousands of partners in total), and to their respective parliaments and governments, so as to underline our alarm at the democratic degradation currently going on in Spain.