

Mr. Frans TIMMERMANS

First Vice-President

Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations,
the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights

European Commission

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Tuesday 26 of September 2017

Dear Mr. Timmermans,

Plataforma per la Llengua is a non-profit organization based in Barcelona that works to promote the Catalan language as a tool for social cohesion in all of the Catalan-speaking territories. After 24 years of work, we have over 14.000 supporting members. We work from an all-embracing standpoint in the socio-economic and audiovisual areas, welcoming and helping newcomers and immigrants with the language and at all levels of education and in the administrations.

Catalan language has more than 10 million speakers and is the 14th most spoken language in Europe, but it is still not officially recognised by the European institutions and its treated as a second class language by the Spanish state. This is why our organization started to campaign in favour of the Catalan referendum that will be hold next 1st October in Catalonia, because only a Catalan state will fully respect our language and will make it official in the EU. You can follow our campaign: "Un estat a favor" (<http://www.unestatafavor.cat/>) (A state in favour).

But the Spanish militarised police force (Guardia Civil), currently being deployed in Barcelona, confiscated our campaign publicity materials that said: "*Do you want a state in favour of the Catalan language? In favour of an official language in Europe. Vote YES*". These actions attempt against human rights and core European values such as freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of thought, which are recognized in articles 10 and 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Ever since Catalonia's self-determination referendum was officially called for the 1st of October, the Spanish government has responded by threatening civil rights in Catalonia. European values and human rights, the freedom of speech, freedom of information and freedom of assembly are being violated by Spanish police forces to search newspapers and printing companies; stopping and annulling political meetings; seizing referendum material; and threatening to imprison democratically-elected politicians.

These days there are growing threats to freedom of expression. Catalan printing companies are being searched by the Guardia Civil looking for printed material related

to the referendum such as voter census, ballots and campaign posters. They are also closing websites. Freedom of the press is at stake. We consider that this situation is unacceptable within the European Union. As you once said: *"The European Union is not just a market or a currency, it is first and foremost a Union of values."*

I would beseech you, as First Vice-President of the European Commission to, to use your unique position to bring your concern about the situation in Catalonia and the Catalan language to the fore. I would urge you to support the people of Catalonia in their pursue of their right to a democratic vote, and to contribute to the international response to the extreme violation of civil liberties currently being imposed on Catalan citizens by the Spanish government.

Yours sincerely,



Òscar Escuder

President

1 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-politics-catalonia-boxes/police-in-catalonia-hunt-for-hidden-ballot-boxes-in-bid-to-foil-referendum-idUSKCN1BQ2MZ>

2 https://elpais.com/ccaa/2017/09/09/catalunya/1504954386_126381.html

3 <http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2017/09/08/la-guardia-civil-registra-una-imprenta-de-constanti-tarragona-en-busca-del-material-para-el-1-o-a-23201633/>

4 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/spanish-police-confiscate-catalan-referendum-material-170918080656349.html>

5 <http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/prosecutor-orders-catalan-police-to-confiscate-ballot-boxes-in-the-wake-of-one-million-strong-rally>

6 <http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/spain-s-guardia-civil-confiscates-1-4-million-referendum-posters-from-warehouses>