

Catalonia needs your solidarity

On 1 October, while millions of Catalans were voting on our self determination, the Spanish government sent thousands of paramilitary police to brutally attack us. The violence against the people and, in contrast, the democratic firmness of the hundreds of thousands of people who peacefully defended their polling stations, illustrate this conflict perfectly.

The Catalan movement is diverse and plural. It is built on a strong foundation of associations, organisations and platforms with a strong progressive content that have promoted policies for the real equality of women and men and against sexual harassment; against evictions and energy poverty; against fracking; a tax on nuclear energy; the prohibition of bullfighting; the prohibition of rubber bullets ... (all these measures were overruled by the Spanish state). This year Catalonia held the biggest demonstration in all Europe in favour of welcoming refugees. The march in response to the terrible attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils this August was a clamour for peace, anti-racism and coexistence. Let no one dare to label this society as narrowly nationalist or backward-looking.

You can have different opinions about independence, but you have to respect the right of the Catalan people to decide our future. And despite the police violence that left 900 people injured, on 1 October we took a clear decision.

In the referendum on self determination of 1 October, more than two million people voted for an independent Catalan Republic, more than 90% of voters. The turnout was higher than that in the consultations on the current statute of autonomy and on the European constitution, and no one questioned the validity of those referendums. The turnout is even more impressive taking into account the repression. Of the 2,300 polling stations, some 400 were closed by police or administrative actions, thus affecting some 770,000 registered voters, whose right to vote was affected.

Furthermore, we can not ignore all those people (including some of the undersigned) who could not vote because the referendum was held under Spanish electoral law, which denies the vote on the grounds of origin, even to people who have resided in the country for a long time. Despite that, they have participated very actively in defending the right to decide of the Catalan people.

Over recent weeks and months, many people have been investigated, taken to court or even arrested because of their ideas; the Spanish paramilitary police have raided Catalan government buildings and media offices; they have closed around 150 web sites... The current state of emergency imposed in Catalonia brings back many memories of Franco's dictatorship. It is another sign of the democratic shortcomings suffered in the Spanish state, where justice has not yet been done for the people who disappeared under the dictatorship and where fascism enjoys a worrying impunity.

We know that the right to decide is supported by 83% of the population, although there is a diversity of opinions concerning independence. We are still one united people. We have worked and want to continue to work from below to maintain that unity in the face of attempts to divide us. This will be possible within the framework of a constituent process, in the patient work of debate and the construction of a society that can bring social progress for all. We could not do it under the suspension of democratic —and probably social— rights that the victory of repression would bring.

The Spanish state does not want to listen to us, just like it hasn't listened to us all these years, and for now the other states are supporting it. It is clear that without strong pressure from the citizenry they won't listen to our democratic demands either.

For that reason, world civil society must denounce the repression and support the right to decide of the people of Catalonia.

We call on different individuals and organisations to act, creating solidarity movements with the democratic rights of Catalonia and against repression. The struggle of the Catalan people shows that our strength lies in popular participation. Therefore, we encourage you to:

- ★ create unitary spaces for mobilisation and pressure that encompass all the democratic and progressive forces that want to be “#WithCatalunya”;
- ★ organise public events, street stalls and other activities to spread the truth about what is happening in Catalonia, and refute the distorted versions promoted by the most backward elements in the Spanish State and their allies;
- ★ call demonstrations and rallies: according to your own local calendar; as part of planned international calls; or as an urgent response to any new escalation of the repression in Catalonia;
- ★ give free reign to your imagination and spontaneity!... think of other forms of action and if they work, let us know so they can be publicised and generalised;
- ★ look to send delegations to visit Catalonia to get to know and to accompany our struggle; we are considering the idea of convening an international meeting in Barcelona.

It is necessary to understand, in every city and every country, what is at stake. If today we allow the repression of the right to decide, then other fundamental rights can be repressed tomorrow in any part of the world.

The struggle of Catalonia is part of the struggle for democracy and justice of the majority of people on the planet. So, please, build solidarity with Catalonia. For us, and also for you.

