

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE TEACHERS OF INSTITUT EL PALAU AND CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY.

On Monday, 23rd April, Saint George's day, the denunciation from the Public Prosecutor specialized in hate and discrimination was made public through the media, against nine of us, teachers from INS El Palau in Sant Andreu de la Barca. According to it, on 2nd and 20th October 2017 some teachers from our school would have harassed the children of the *Guardia Civil* Police Squad due to their nationality, as well as insulted the Security Squads from the State. Neither in the denunciation nor the official broadcasting done afterwards was the testimony from the teachers, done in January before the *Guardia Civil* taken into account. In their testimony they denied those groundless accusations unequivocally.

The facts which took place on 1st October found their way around the globe and struck the country, and that was the reason why the lessons on 2nd October were not conventional. At *Institut El Palau*, like in many other schools around Catalonia, the further debate around this topic which arose in the classrooms were done bearing in mind the values that the Catalan state school fosters and defends. They are the same ones that INS El Palau has always followed: respect, empathy, diversity and critical awareness. The expressions attributed to some teachers in the denunciation are not true and distort the different procedure which took place in the classrooms.

On 2nd October, those teachers who wanted to do so joined the call for a strike of 15 minutes, at 12:00 at the main entrance of the school. The protest was for Peace and Non-Violence. Before 12:00, the teachers lead the Secondary students to the playground area. This area is totally opposite to the entrance door, and there is no visual connection with it. Some teachers were there on duty to guard the students for the quarter of an hour mentioned above. The students were there for this period of time not doing any specific activity.

On 3rd October, the newspaper ABC published some news for the first time talking about the assumed management of the facts the school had carried out the day before. From the following day, 4th October some different media have been appearing in front of the entrance of the school. They started to broadcast a version of the facts, according to which some students' sensibilities would have been wounded. Although until the present day no formal complaint has occurred, neither in the school or the Inspection Service, on the above mentioned 3rd October the habitual teaching procedure was started, in order to create gathering spaces among the students, the teachers, the educational Institution and the Parents' Association, aiming at dealing with the situation, counteract the biased version which was being projected and guarantee the privacy of the students.

On 27th October, the Local Services from our region, *Baix Llobregat* informed the union representatives in the Staff Meeting, that Inspection had carried out the appropriate inquiries and no evidence of an incorrect behavior had been found. At the same time, the Town Council from Sant Andreu de la Barca summoned the families implicated and the headmaster from the school. The families did not attend the meeting. On 6th November, the School Board

—maximum body responsible of caring for coexistence in the school, and with representatives from the teachers, the families, the students and the Town Hall —approved in unanimous consent a communiqué rejecting the serious accusations against the teachers and defended their professionalism. Our feeling of defenselessness was huge, even more when at the beginning of January the teachers are summoned to declare at the station of the *Guardia Civil* Police Squad.

Over the following months the pressing from the media has wounded a lot both the students and we, the teachers. The last had chosen not to stimulate the public debate in order to stick to the educational dynamics, being it a priority over defending ourselves from the criticism and hostility we have received and are still receiving. Nevertheless, the Public Prosecutor has not filed the case and on the contrary, it has started a legal proceeding disproportionate and inappropriate—using the qualifications from the *Síndic de Greuges* in their report from 2nd May 2018. For this reason, on 24th April, after the denunciation from the Public Prosecutor appeared in the press, the Teachers Assembly decided to break the silence, taking care of intimacy and respect for everyone, anyway. We have the right and it is urgent to defend ourselves from the unfair criticism, from the questioning of our professionalism and the attribution of crimes we have not committed.

Nevertheless, as it was to be expected, the divulgation of the denunciation and further publication of names, surnames and photographs of the teachers affected (El Mundo 29th April 2018) reverberated in some media as a form of derision and political instrumentalization. This caused the teachers affected being pointed at, but also the students mentioned, thus wounding the whole educational community. This malicious spreading was beyond all ethics, since it did not respect the presumption of innocence, and was nothing but a mechanical copy of the denunciation. We feel we are the victims of a campaign aiming at discrediting the Catalan state educational model, conferring it a function of indoctrination and promoter of a nonexistent division. Our lawsuit, apart from intimidating the whole educational community, is aiming at us becoming a symbol of a alleged breaking of coexistence in Catalonia.

In spite of the energy and means deployed to build an accusation with no foundation, the signs of support are growing, like in the demonstration on 1st May convened by former students in front of the Town Hall of Sant Andreu de la Barca and the function on 10th May, with the public reading of the support communiqué from parents.

These proceedings affect all of us, and for this reason we would like to request:

- Solidarity with the teachers of El Palau who have been accused.
- Rejection of the problem being tried.
- Raise our voices against the pressure and criminalization of the teachers.
- Demand our educational and political institutions the protection of our teachers.
- Join to stop the offensive against the Catalan state school.

Sant Andreu de la Barca, 15 th May 2018