



## **Joint statement in response to the Supreme Court verdict in the First of October referendum trial**

This is a critical hour for Catalonia. We just learned the Spanish Supreme Court's verdict against 12 honourable, democratic, peaceful individuals. They've been condemned the speaker of the Catalan parliament and the vice-president and ministers of the government responsible for the First of October referendum, and the presidents of Òmnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly: Carme Forcadell, Oriol Junqueras, Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Quim Forn, Raül Romeva, Dolors Bassa, Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sànchez.

Today, individuals who always acted in a strictly democratic and absolutely peaceful manner have been sentenced prison between 9 and 13 years in prison. And convicting them is an insult to democracy and a show of contempt for Catalan society, because all of them are either social leaders or individuals who acted based on a political commitment, in line with the programme on which they stood for election. They acted in accordance with the wishes of many citizens – seeking independence as a democratic exercise, with the support of a parliamentary majority. Right to the last minute, they worked to pursue this path in a manner agreed with the Spanish state. And some have borne the unjust punishment of spending two years in preventive detention. For all these reasons, the Catalan government and I personally reject these verdicts. Because we consider them unjust and antidemocratic, and because they are part of a political trial and wide-ranging campaign of legal action against Catalonia's right to self-determination and against the independence movement. Now, more than ever, we stand by their families, because today, more than ever, we feel a sense of fraternal solidarity with those convicted by the Supreme Court.

Throughout its history, Catalonia has sought to assert itself as a nation. But despite international law, agreements and conventions intended to defend human, civil and political rights, including the right to self-determination, we have never received a positive response from the Spanish state. In recent years, we have witnessed a process of recentralization and a progressive dilution of the idea of a state made up of autonomous regions. This has been accompanied by rapid democratic regression and by repression that has affected hundreds of Catalans. Holding a referendum is not a crime. It is not even identified as a crime in the criminal code. The right to self-determination is a right of nations recognized in international treaties signed by the Kingdom of Spain.

In this trial, we have seen how facts have been invented and a false narrative constructed to justify committing what is an act of vengeance, not an act of justice. We are faced with a state that is incapable taking on board everything that democracy in a

modern state must entail, that social harmony between its citizens on the will of the people – the first republican institution and the one that should be the foundation on which modern states are built.

All of Catalan society knows what happened on the First of October and remembers with deep emotion how, with dignity and solidarity, we were able to repel an unjustified and inhumane attack by Spanish police and security forces. It is clear from simple observation of the facts that the fundamental rights of the accused – and by extension those of all the Catalans they represent – have been violated. Democracy means protecting these fundamental rights, not violating them in pursuit of the kind of ideological and political persecution more characteristic of outdated authoritarian regimes. In our view, the accusation and the verdict in this case are also an accusation and a verdict against millions of Catalans.

We call for an end to repression, for the release of the political prisoners, for the exiles to be free to return home – for an amnesty that should mark an endpoint for all of those who have suffered reprisals. Dialogue, voting and freedom are always the path to resolving conflicts. Threats, prison and punishment resolve nothing. Using the criminal code against the will of the people is a relic of the dictatorship; it has no place in a democracy.

The Spanish state's refusal to launch a dialogue and seek a democratic solution to the political conflict will not stop us from acting on our determination to build an independent state for our nation. We reaffirm our commitment – stated on 1 October of this year – to move forward, with no excuses, on the path to the Catalan Republic. Repression will never triumph over dialogue, democracy and self-determination.

Once again, we express our deep and heartfelt solidarity with our convicted colleagues, their families, and the political and civic organizations they represent. We vow never to waver in our determination to give them back their freedom. We also thank them for their generosity and the responsibility they have taken on. Their sacrifice will not be in vain. It will be the seed of freedom and justice.

Catalan society will respond to this ignominy in the same way it has always expressed itself: with determination, calm, firmness and public spiritedness – in the democratic and peaceful way we are known for. Our cause is just because the cause of freedom is a just cause. This is a critical hour. In the days ahead, we must each give the best of ourselves. All Catalans must help each other and work together – with nobility and a sense of responsibility – to build a better country. It is time, once again, for us to be an example to the world in our struggle for justice and freedom.