

Institutional statement from President Aragonès following the approval of the pardons for the pro-independence leaders

Palau de la Generalitat, 22 June 2021

After more than three and a half years unjustly deprived of their freedom, nine political and social leaders, members of the Government and Parliament of Catalonia, leaders of civil society, people with whom we share an unequivocal commitment to the well-being, prosperity and freedom of our country, will be released from prison.

They entered with the conviction that they had not committed any crime. With the certainty that the desire for people to freely decide the political future of the country can in no way be considered illegal.

They leave with their heads held high and their ideals intact. They leave with a strengthened will to build a free and fair Catalan republic. One that is pro-European and prosperous.

They leave with the conviction that it is time to respect the will of the Catalan people, to find a definitive resolution to the conflict between Catalonia and Spain.

On 14 February, for the first time, the independence movement surpassed 50% of the vote in an election, proving once again that there are many of us who are convinced that independence is the best tool for improving the lives of all citizens in the country. For generating greater equity and equal opportunities. For generating greater prosperity and well-being for all. And many of us are convinced that the best way to achieve this is through dialogue, through negotiation, through agreement.

That is why it is the time for amnesty and the right to self-determination. It is the time for a negotiated referendum. It is the time for a solution that generates more internal consensus, that ensures international support and that guarantees inalienable social cohesion.

The step taken today helps to build credibility on that path, the path of negotiation and agreement to resolve the conflict. That is why the Government of Catalonia will devote all our efforts to making this new stage a success, where negotiation, where politics, must become a forum for resolving a conflict that has been entrenched for too long.

Today's decision by the Spanish Government is an acknowledgement that the convictions were unjust.

That is why we are delighted that our colleagues, who have been in prison for more than three and a half years, have regained their freedom.

The pardons undoubtedly alleviate their personal situation, that of their families and that of their closest circles.

They undoubtedly alleviate the suffering of a large majority of the citizens of Catalonia, who demanded the release of these political prisoners.

But in no case do they end the repression against those of us who want to decide freely whether Catalonia should become a republic, with full rights and freedoms.

In no case do they put an end to the disqualification that continues to restrict the political rights of the pro-independence leaders being released from prison.

In no case does it resolve the situation of the exiles, with President Puigdemont at the forefront.

In no case does it resolve the all-embracing legal action against independence, with thousands of people pending trial or under threat from the Court of Auditors for their commitment to democracy.

That is why we advocate amnesty, because it means putting an end to all repression.

That is why we will remain steadfast in our commitment to achieving it, convinced that, together with self-determination, they represent the country's major consensuses.

We therefore demand that Spain heed the call of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to put an end to the repression without further delay, to withdraw the demands for extradition of exiles and to stop the persecution of political representatives and public servants in the exercise of their mandate.

We demand that Spain cease all repression and that it commit to working towards an agreed solution to the conflict with Catalonia, based on respect for the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights, as the Council of Europe recognises we did in October 2017.

It is time to put an end to the repression. It is time for an internationally supported negotiated referendum, which is what a large majority of the population of Catalonia wants.

Amnesty and self-determination. Freedom and democracy. Negotiation and agreement.

It is time to get back to politics. Let's approach it with the most exacting standards and with a commitment to finding an agreed solution, one that respects the will of the people of Catalonia.