

Author: Quim Torra, Carles Puigdemont and Artur Mas
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King Felipe VI
Zaruela Palace
Madrid

Sir,

'Catalonia is what the Catalans want it to be.' With these words of yours in 1990, we want to begin a letter which we would prefer not to have written. They are words that we share and that we have wanted to respect in every moment. We would have wished that you as a leading figure, like that of many State institutions, would have remained on the periphery of the political struggle among the citizens of the Spanish state. There are institutions that, in a democracy, must be a guarantee of equality and protection for every citizen. Even more so in a constitutional monarchy, befitting the 21st century and a European Union where there are exemplary models of behaviour.

We are convinced that a modern and European constitutional monarchy should also aspire toward equality, justice and freedom, fraternity, without any repudiation. Above all, it must aspire toward a genuine and authentically accepted democracy. That is to say, understanding that its powers are derived from the people, and not the other way round. In this sense, it is the will of the people which ultimately prevails. These are values that we will never cease to defend from the Presidency of the Generalitat, from Parliament, from the mobilised and conscientious society, from exile or from prisons. We thought that they were values that ought to have been shared by the Head of State, the Spanish Government and by all institutions. Yet, especially by the Head of State as he ought to represent and respect the rights of every citizen and of every autonomous community.

Instead, we have seen in recent years how time after time we have been denied, agreements have been unfulfilled, the democratic decision of the people of Catalonia that approved a statute in a referendum protected by Spanish laws has been quashed, those who thought differently have been pursued using resources of the institutions of the State.

We could make a never-ending list, but it was brought to an end in these recent months: firstly, 1st October, the criminal, disproportionate and unacceptable violence against citizens who wanted to peacefully express their vote; and secondly, in a democratic outrage against Catalan institutions expelling the democratically elected Government and dissolving a completely legal and legitimate Parliament. In sum, as we see it, by

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means of the illegal application of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. It has criminally persecuted, members of the Catalanian Government, the President of the Generalitat, the President of Parliament, and two directors of civil organisations with the most members in the entire country. Finally, the electoral results of 21st December have not been allowed to be put into effect, preventing the investiture of the candidate to the Presidency who had majority support.

You are already aware of it, sir, but it is worth reminding you that currently there are nine Catalan political prisoners jailed in Madrid, seven political exiles in four European countries, and hundreds of citizens under inquiry and reprisal.

For example, there is that case of the singer Valtònyc, who has been sent to prison for the lyrics of one his seven songs, which in any modern state would be protected by the freedom of expression. Those who have been accused by the Spanish Supreme Court suffer unjust imprisonment in compliance with a senseless pre-emptive sentence, without any valid reason on an international scale. It is a fragrant violation of rights recognised by the UN itself and which have risen concern in the relevant domains in the majority of the established democracies around the world.

We understand, Sir, that all of this ought to be put to your for questioning. In your appearance on 3rd October, you opened up a considerable wound to many citizens who would have never thought that the Head of State would give his approval to the violent repression meted out by the police against completely peaceful citizens. In reality, should you not have positioned yourself above some personal interests and look to be a voice of conciliation and defence of dialogue?

In the last three or so years, the citizens of Catalonia have, on four occasions, expressed their opinion regarding the political future of Catalonia: on three occasions, November 2014, September 2015 and October 2017, called by the Generalitat; and in the latest instance, December 2017, ordered by elections imposed by the Spanish Government.

On two of these occasions, the State attempted to prevent the vote, unsuccessfully. In the remaining two, with record turnouts, Parliament was formed with an absolute majority in favour of independence. The people of Catalonia have spoken. Yet, who listened to them? Who has respected their will? Who, from the Spanish institutions, has opened the political dialogue that the Catalan reality demands and deserves. Until now, no one.

Let us repeat again: we want to implement the popular mandate by peaceful and democratic means, and prioritise the agreement with the Spanish Government. It is a firm and resolute commitment from this freedom movement which is driven by the people themselves. It is engaged and will not desist in the face of repression, prison or exile. We ask you to listen to this democratic clamour. We ask you to be the Head of a

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State who respects the will of the people expressed at the ballot box. Democracy is also the capacity to reform legal frameworks to the changing realities shaped by the people's wishes.

We know the constitutional limitations that prevent us from exercising which actions. However, we also know the constitutional faculties which allow us to exercise specific functions, among which emphasise mediating and moderating between the powers of the State.

This week, the Mediterranean Games will open in Tarragona. It is an opportunity where we celebrate its history in order to repair and sew back together that which violence, repression and persecution against the referendum on 1st October fomented. Please understand, Sir, that the first of October is and will be a very special day for the majority of Catalans. Make the most of this moment and do not waste the occasion. This week you will come to Catalonia and we want to greet you with the willingness to open a new stage of dialogue, negotiation, recognition, democratic respect, institutional modernity and respect for civil and political rights and fundamental freedoms.

It is worth opening a new stage of negotiation which always ends by giving the floor to the citizens of Catalonia.

We understand that political conflicts have always been resolved by democratic means. The voting papers, the ballot boxes, the electoral colleges and the debate of ideas are the greatest exponent of democratic expression. We are sure that no democrat can oppose giving a voice to the people. Let us end this abnormal situation once and for all in which judges and police occupy the space that ought to be occupied by the voice and words of political representatives. Let us end the prisons that confine democrats and exiles and that dispel peaceful people. Let the law be reformed according to democratic will, so as to not be a democracy that must be bound by ancient laws. Let politics return to politics and debate and the exchange of opinions according to the rules with which we all collectively move forward to deal with disputes. We are not asking for anything that is out of reach. Listen to us without hasty premise nor prejudice; and help us to facilitate a process of openness, modernisation and democratic prevalence.

If you do it, you will find us there.

Respectfully,

The Right Honourable Artur Mas i Gavarró

The Right Honourable Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó

The Right Honourable Quim Torra i Pla

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P.S. from President Quim Torra i Pla

Sir, at a stage that must be presided by dialogue, I offer you my open hand in order to begin this dialogue, the ingenuity that moves the relationships between Catalonia and Spain. We must talk. I must be able to explain to you everything that we have written with the presidents Mas and Puigdemont in the foregoing letter. It is, for me, in my disposition as President of Catalonia, a moral duty. For this reason, I am convinced that you will want to find a moment in your coming to Catalonia this Friday to do it and to meet us. We are not asking you to renounce anything, only that you hold us to a most open and democratic reading of the Constitution and in a role which is bestowed upon you as Head of State. I believe that the predisposition to dialogue is the minimum demand to be able to maintain a relationship of respect, which is the responsibility of institutions and nations. I must be able to explain to you how a large part of the people of Catalonia feels.

Respectfully,

The Right Honourable President Quim Torra i Pla.

Barcelona, 20th June 2018