



Mayor of Barcelona

7 February 2019

Mr Donald Tusk
President
European Council
Brussels

Dear President,

As Mayor of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, I am writing to convey my concern as well as that of the institution I represent, regarding the trial of twelve pro-independence leaders which is due to start on 12 February.

This is an anomalous situation in Europe, given the political condition of those on trial—members of parliament, ministers from the previous Catalan government and civil society leaders—and the serious crimes which they stand accused of—rebellion and sedition—carrying prison sentences of up to 74 years. Additionally, there is the case of a Spanish extreme right party could be fraudulently using the private prosecution in the trial to spread its ideology of hatred and obtain electoral gains.

Although I am not an independence supporter, nor do I share many of the decisions of the previous Catalan government, I believe that this trial is a political fiasco, placing the space for dialogue and negotiation in danger and entrusting an eminently political problem to be dealt with by the courts. Moreover, if the trial ends in guilty verdicts and sentences it will not help to reassess Catalonia's position within Spain, but it will instead serve to exacerbate division and hamper the construction of a negotiated solution.

Furthermore, I believe that the pre-trial incarceration violates the rights of the accused to prepare an effective defence, and the crimes they are accused of are completely disproportionate, as deemed by various international human rights organisations, given that they have neither instigated the Catalan people or the government to commit any violence, as some European State law courts have acknowledged. As such, we cannot ignore the fact that we are faced with a political conflict, and that the best way to address this is by strengthening dialogue instigated recently.

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Ada Colau Ballano





Mayor of Barcelona

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I would also like to take this opportunity to present you with the Institutional Declaration which was approved by the majority of political forces of Barcelona City Council, demanding a fair and impartial trial with full guarantees, calling for the accused to be released from custody so that they can prepare their defence, and to aid the task of international observers.

Lastly, I would like to inform you that I have invited a group of members from the European Parliament to follow the trial on 20 February. This is not merely an internal affair of the Spanish State. The consequences of this trial are of interest to European institutions as a whole, and will have repercussions both on political stability—currently under threat from the new rise of xenophobic populism—and the full recognition of human rights and democratic freedoms which, for over 62 years, have been a beacon guiding the way for the construction of the European Union.

Kind regards,

Ada Colau Ballano