

assemblea

OSCE Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) II 2021 Democratic Law-Making: Ensuring Participation April 26th-27th, 2021

SESSION III: Public Participation and the Digital Space

Written statement of the Catalan National Assembly (Civil Society Organization)

Democratic law-making is aimed at promoting pluralism, inclusivity and broader diversity, including meaningful political participation by national minorities, and securing involvement of civil society. The use of digital tools has the potential of promoting consultative law-making, helping to increase public trust in the democratic decision-making process, as well as for vocalizing under-represented voices.

In this regard, since 2017 Spanish authorities have been limiting the capacity of civil society organizations in Catalonia to develop their activities, through the use of lawfare and political persecution, curtailing the right of freedom of expression and public participation. This also affects the digital space, primarily through the Law on the Protection of Public Security and antiterrorist legislation, which have been used to persecute tweeter users and activists for criticising public authorities and expressing political opinions.

The most notable case of digital political persecution took place during the repression of the 2017 Catalan independence referendum, when the Spanish Civil Guard shut down more than 200 web sites, many of them with no prior judicial order, including the website of the organization I represent. In a similar vein, a few months ago a public campaign on consumer awareness promoted by our organization was suspended by a court as an interim measure, and the website of the campaign was shut down.

Until today, over 3300 Catalan activists and representatives have been politically persecuted by Spanish authorities, threatening the rights to freedom of expression and information as well as the right of political participation of the entire Catalan people.

For all these reasons, the Catalan National Assembly calls on Spanish authorities to respect, protect and promote the right to political participation in the digital space of the Catalan people, and for OSCE experts to visit Catalonia and report on the situation there.