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Unchecked Spanish Far-Right Violence

Virtually none of the hundreds of violent, politically motivated ultra-nationalist aggressions (tyre slashing, airgun pellet shooting, physical aggression...) have ended up in prosecutions.



Source: <https://comunicats.cat/geolocation-of-incidents-in-favour-of-the-unity-of-spain/>

Description

According to one detailed report, *En nom d'Espanya (In Spain's name)*, between September 8th and December 11th 2017, there were at least 139 attested violent incidents in Catalonia. This included 86 politically motivated, physical attacks, aimed at defending the unity of Spain (excluding the Spanish police attacks on voting day). Documented examples of far-right violence, largely in Catalonia (also in Valencia and Madrid), between September 22nd 2017 and February 9th 2018 are available on the website: (<https://spanishradicals.github.io>). This website presented videos of the neo-Fascist attack that took place during an official event in the Catalan Government's Blanquerna centre in Madrid, arguably the only case where there has been a conviction to date.

In March 2018, a social centre was burnt down in Barcelona, with threatening Nazi graffiti painted on the walls. Meanwhile, a further study shows that in the following months, between May and July 2018, there were at least 178 similar Fascist-style attacks in Catalonia.

In very few of these cases has anyone been charged by the police, public prosecutors or judges, however an exception was made in one of the eight cases from 30 September 2017 to 17 February 2018. In this case, pellet shots were fired at balconies and windows in Palamós that were displaying Catalan symbols and resulted in the public prosecutor calling for a gunman to be fined €60.

During the night of April 3rd 2018, over 150 car tyres were slashed throughout Catalonia: Verges (95), Sarrià de Ter (16), Medinyà (13), Girona (13) and Llagostera. However, despite this display of violence, the only person taken to court for this was the mayor of Verges (Ignasi Sabater), for his speculation suggesting that the responsibility possibly lay with the involvement of Spanish police in a quasi-paramilitary operation. In several other night-time attacks in Verges, dozens of independence flags were torn down and stolen.

In January 2019, the Catalan government said there had been at least 328 incidents of similar magnitude since January 2017.

Before

The electoral victories – and ultimately the progression – of the Catalan independence movement, led its opponents to espouse increasingly aggressive and radical rhetoric. This resulted in a large increase in the number of incidents of radical, Spanish-nationalist violence. It would peak during and after the self-determination referendum on October 1st 2017, particularly after independence was voted for by Catalan representatives in Parliament on October 27th 2017. These incidents have been mapped by a private cooperative initiative, uncovering the stark reality of both the reach and the intensity of such violence: Comunicats.cat (see map above, and references).

The outcome

Popular opinion holds that all such acts of Fascist violence have wrongly gone without any punitive measures being taken against any suspects (e.g. in Blanes, Palamós and elsewhere, the banners calling for political prisoners to be freed have been ripped down). There is also a desire to punish those responsible for cases in which unmarked Spanish police cars and policemen have been identified in nocturnal sorties, accused of removing independence flags and yellow ribbons.

The main opposition party in the Catalan Parliament, Ciudadanos, has taken the baton of pro-Spanish nationalism from the Partido Popular (4 seats out of 135 in the December 21st 2017 election) and has even called on the general public to remove yellow ribbons from public spaces. They have openly taken part in such activities themselves, as well as in the destruction of other symbols. In Alella, for example, the Party's two main leaders ripped down yellow ribbons in front of the cameras, while their parliamentary spokesman decided to provocatively remove a yellow ribbon from the seat of one of the political prisoners in the Catalan Parliament. In Amer, the hometown of Mr. Carles Puigdemont, all symbols related with Catalan independence were aggressively removed by members of Ciudadanos. Further to these incidents, a former Ciudadanos parliamentary candidate was identified as a fully-

fledged member of a Girona-based night squad, accused of removing material from Sant Julià, Sant Gregori and Sarrià town halls (February 2019).

In August 2018, they called an anti-independence demonstration. Despite it transpiring that this particular case of aggression was not politically motivated, during the demonstration a Tele-Madrid cameraman was mistaken for a Catalan TV reporter and was threatened and hit by a small group.

Other deliberately targeted violence includes a plain-clothes police officer, who – in broad daylight and before shocked witnesses – punched photojournalist Jordi Borràs in the face and body several times, to cries of “Viva Franco!” (see WeReport case). This, at least, will presumably not go unpunished, though the police officer has, to our knowledge, not yet been suspended from active service.

In general, demonstrations in favour of the unity of Spain have been used by Spanish ultra-nationalists to violently intimidate Catalan citizens, as well as to parade Nazi-style symbols. Citizens of foreign origin have been attacked in such occasions too, as on 29th October 2017, when a Sikh citizen wearing a turban was insulted and assaulted.

On Twitter, the hashtag #AlertaUltra is used to flag such incidents.

Violated laws

The impunity of fascist attacks in Spain is a violation of the principle of equality before the law, protected in Articles 14 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 20 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Moreover, these attacks are a breach of the principle of non-discrimination – Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and could constitute hate crimes according with the Spanish Criminal Code, although this article has never been used to protect a national minority like Catalans.

The attackers oppose the right of self-determination protected by Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and constitute a risk to the physical integrity of proindependence citizens -article 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union-, as well as to its liberty and security – article 6 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

All these principles and fundamental rights are also included in the Spanish Constitution.

References

Franco's fascism is alive and kicking in Spain (in English). The Spectator

Francoist values 'still present,' warns Catalan Speaker. ACN (in English)

There were at least 139 violent incidents by defenders of Spain's unity, in Catalonia, between 8 September 2017 and 11 December 2017: physical aggression, vandalism, threats. (in English)

There were at least 178 Fascist-style attacks in Catalonia between May and July 2018 (in Catalan), Nació Digital:

Ciudadanos' problem with the far right: when extremists are on its party lists. ElNacional (in English)

Barcelona youth centre burnt down, graffitied with nazi and fascist symbols. ElNacional (in English)

Protesters attack journalist at demonstration against yellow ribbons. ACN (in English)

200 organizations march against far-right in Barcelona. ACN (in English)

Seven people injured in fascist attack in Manresa, Catalonia. ElNacional (in English)

Swastikas painted on pro-independence group HQ. ACN (in English)

Catalan parties warn of 'extreme Spanish nationalism' as far-right rises in Andalusia. ACN (in English)

President backs Catalan police to 'defuse' threat of fascist violence. ACN (in English)

Catalan president urges Spain to take action against "increasing violence". ACN (in English)

Hooded unionists remove yellow crosses at Barcelona beach, injuring five. ElNacional (In English).

'Aggressions' at unionist protest regretted by Barcelona deputy mayor. ACN (in English)

The Generalitat, through the Office of Civil and Political Rights, puts the number of attacks by ultra-radical [Spanish nationalists] since January 2017 at 328, and warns that about twenty 'very well organized' groups, that act with 'the same parameters' and in 'paramilitary fashion' (in Catalan), VilaWeb:

Eight people are identified for stealing flags and banners from town councils. They ripped down and spoiled material from the balconies of Sant Julià, Sant Gregori and Sarrià town halls. Among those caught in the act there is a former Ciudadanos candidate: (in Catalan)

Man attacked after pro-Spain demonstration in Mataró. ElNacional (in English)

Aggression towards independence supporters in central Barcelona. ElNacional (in English)

[A group of unionists rips down the independence banner from the «Casa del poble» in Blanes, a private organisation that proclaimed Blanes «as a municipality of the Catalan Republic» \(with video\). Nació Digital:](#)

Documents

[“In Spain’s Name” report on Spanish far-right violence in Catalonia](#)

[Appendix to “In Spain’s Name” report: Chronology of Incidents](#)

[Geolocation of violent incidents by Spanish nationalists \[MAP\]. Incidents with political motivation in favour of the unity of Spain registered in the Catalan Countries.](#)

[Documented examples of ultra-right violence, largely in Catalonia \(also in Valencia and Madrid\), from September 22, 2017 to February 9 2018.](#)

[European Convention on Human Rights,](#)

[International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,](#)

[EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,](#)