

THE CNJC IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINE, KURDISTAN AND THE WESTERN SAHARA: THREE PEOPLES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ARC IN CONFLICT

Executive Committee – Barcelona, 15 November 2014

The National Youth Council of Catalonia (CNJC) has been actively involved in the nascent cooperation processes that have taken place in the Euro-Mediterranean area over the last few years, contributing to a gradual strengthening of democratic participation and the promotion of human rights, values of peace and solidarity through youth work and the establishment of transnational youth platforms. For this reason, as reported on other occasions, the CNJC cannot remain silent before the human rights violations currently affecting three peoples of the Mediterranean arc: Palestine, Kurdistan and the Western Sahara.

In Palestine, Operation “Protective Edge” undertaken on 8 July in Gaza, is the umpteenth example of aggression by a State – Israel – which has made the systematic breach of the human rights of the Palestinian people and breach of United Nations resolutions¹ the maxim of its Foreign Policy. According to the latest reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the bombardment of the Palestinian population this summer has ended with more than 2,000 civilians dead, including more than 500 children. It is calculated that almost 20,000 homes have been made uninhabitable and 110,000 civilians are displaced in emergency refuges on Palestinian territory. In the same way, the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem has intensified, with more than 2,000 houses searched, more than 600 people arrested and 18 murdered. Ultimately, the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza strip since 2005 has merely intensified, alongside the discriminatory measures undertaken by the State of Israel against its Arab minorities.

Meanwhile, the conflict existing since 1984 between the Turkish Army and the Kurdish Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, PKK) and the assimilation policies the Kurdish people has been subjected to in Syria, Iran and Iraq have been widely ignored by the international community until the precipitation of the events of the last few weeks, in the context of the Jihadist siege of Syria and Iraq. Considered to be the largest nation in the world without a State, the Kurdish people of northern Syria are currently facing siege by the Islamic State, turning the city of Kobani into a symbol of Kurdish resistance against the Jihadists and the self-determination of the Kurdish people. The humanitarian crisis deriving from this has forced international bodies to

¹ This is the case with Resolution 194 (1948) of the General Assembly and 237 (1967) of the United Nations Security Council which, among others, urge the government of Israel to allow the return of Palestinian refugees, access to Jerusalem and the control of the city by the United Nations; as well as the Resolution 242 (1967) of the United Nations Security Council, condemning the acquisition of territory by warlike means (applicable to the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights).

position themselves hurriedly. Despite this, we consider that the response of the international community has been lukewarm as in no case has it involved denouncing the assimilation practices and the *de facto* connivance of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq with the siege of the Kurdish people.

Finally, we denounce the breach of International Law involved in the Moroccan Green March of 1975 and the subsequent occupation of Sahrawi territory, one day after the International Court of Justice in The Hague determined that there was no link of sovereignty between the Western Sahara and Morocco. In this sense, the CNJC reminds the international authorities of the current paralysis concerning the solution of the conflict. The Western Sahara is still considered by the United Nations to be a territory awaiting decolonisation and the Sahrawi Republic has not been recognised as an independent state by any European Union country, including Spain, in the face of clear political and economic pressure from the Kingdom of Morocco. Moreover, the CNJC stresses the international illegality of the "Wall of Shame" – a wall more than 2,000 kilometres long dividing Sahrawi territory, built and overseen by the Moroccan authorities in order to contain the guerrillas of the National Sahrawi Liberation Movement.

Catalan youth organisations can see that the situations of these three peoples in conflict are linked by a nexus: passivity and even, in some cases, the economic, cultural and political complicity of the international community in the face of cases of flagrant breaches of human rights and situations of collective punishment and ethnic cleansing. The Government of Catalonia is no exception, as its relations with Morocco, Turkey and Israel have only been strengthened in recent times.

For this reason, the CNJC and its organisations urge the Government of Catalonia to:

- Put into practice the guiding principles of the National Agreement on Foreign Action promoted by civil society (to which the CNJC adheres), seeking to provide guidelines for a future Catalan Foreign Action Act committed to human rights, the promotion of peace and non-violence, human security, solidarity and the right of peoples to self-determination, among others.
- Carry out the relevant procedures allowing the international recognition and self-determination of the Palestinian, Kurdish and Sahrawi peoples.

Moreover, with respect in particular to the occupation of Palestine, we demand that the Catalan Government:

- Publishes the agreements signed with the Israeli government, companies and institutions, indicating the role of these in the occupation of Palestinian territories.
- As the governments of Germany, Holland and Norway have done recently, pledges not to sign any kind of agreement with these companies and

institutions of Israeli origin involved in the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territories.

- Following the example of the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany and France, informs Catalan citizens of the risks of doing business with companies involved in the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territories.
- Puts an end to all commercial relations between Catalan public institutions and the Israeli military and security sector.
- Encourages Catalan universities to cancel existing agreements with Israeli universities that are involved with the army and with armament companies.
- Demands the release of Palestinian prisoners imprisoned in Israel under the administrative detention system or for political reasons.

With respect to the Kurdish nation, the CNJC requires the Government of Catalonia to:

- Inform the Government of Turkey of the necessity to recognise the Kurdish identity, accept Kurdish democratic autonomy within the Turkish State and recognise the right to receive education in the Kurdish language.
- Inform the Turkish Government of the need to stop persecuting elected officers, trade unionists and activists in social movements in the context of the PKK.
- Recognise the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people in Syria and Iraq, bearing in mind that this is the only democratising political process currently existing in the entire Syrian State.

With respect to the occupation of the Western Sahara, the CNJC and Catalan youth organisations demand that the Government of Catalonia:

- Promotes and protects observation visits by institutional, civil and media delegations to the occupied territories of the Western Sahara and the Tindouf refugee camps. These perform international observation tasks and contribute to making the conflict more visible everywhere. In this sense, we condemn the veto and repeated expulsion by the Moroccan authorities of all international delegations visiting the occupied territories of the Western Sahara.
- Establishes institutional relations with the Government of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and provides support for the holding of a free and binding referendum to decide the political future of the Western Sahara, as established by the law of self-determination of peoples recognised in the United Nations' Charter, Resolution 1514 of December 1960 and subsequent United Nations resolutions.
- Pays the debt of the Catalan Cooperation Fund to the projects it manages directly in the Tindouf refugee camps.

- Informs the Kingdom of Morocco of the need to respect human rights in the occupied territories and to end the exploitation of the natural and economic resources of the Western Sahara.
- Calls on the relevant international bodies to include monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for human rights violations as part of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Moreover, the National Youth Council of Catalonia pledges to:

- Continue to provide support to campaigns broadly backed by civil society, such as the Cries against the Wall Platform (“Plataforma Gritos contra el Muro”) in the case of the Sahara or the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) in the case of Palestine, demanding the peaceful resolution of the conflicts.
- Continue upholding human rights and peace, the right to the self-determination of all peoples and the rights of young people everywhere, especially nearby in the Mediterranean arc.
- Continue working in Euro-Mediterranean spaces and forums where the CNJC participates to make these situations visible and uphold human rights and peace.

Resolution presented by the Board of the CNJC.