



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
10 September 2025

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

Sixtieth session

8 September–3 October 2025

Agenda item 6

Universal periodic review

### **Written statement submitted by International Probono Legal Services Association Limited, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\***

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 August 2025]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Spain: Universal Periodic Review Outcome and the Situation of Catalonia**

The International Pro Bono Legal Services Association Limited (IPLSA), in collaboration with Justice pour Tous Internationale (JPTi) and Consell de la República, acknowledges the report from the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Spain, which is currently before the Human Rights Council for adoption during its sixtieth session. However, the report inadequately addresses significant systemic human rights concerns on two critical fronts: firstly, the deployment of surveillance technologies against Catalan representatives, journalists, lawyers, and civil society actors; and secondly, the inconsistent application of the Amnesty Law of 2024, which was intended to terminate politically motivated prosecutions stemming from the Catalan independence process.

The utilisation of spyware, such as Pegasus, has severely compromised the rights to privacy, political participation, and freedom of association. The absence of independent investigations into these matters has left victims without remedies and entrenched a culture of impunity. The omission of these issues from the Working Group's report represents a serious shortcoming, given the gravity of these violations and their direct impact on democratic processes.

Moreover, Spain's record on handling protests during 2019-2020, coupled with the Working Group's response, highlights a concerning disparity in the application of UN mechanisms. It serves as a reminder that scrutiny is not uniformly applied between cases originating from the Global North and those from the Global South. The leniency observed in the handling of dissent within Western Europe contrasts sharply with the disproportionate focus on similar issues in the Global South, raising questions about the consistency and fairness of international oversight.

Furthermore, the refusal of Spain's highest courts to apply the Amnesty Law consistently and equitably can only be characterised as a form of judicial rebellion. Rather than serving as a means of reconciliation, the Amnesty Law has become a source of further conflict, as judicial authorities openly defy its provisions.

The cumulative impact of these practices has led many Catalan leaders, activists, and representatives to seek self-exile, as they face the prospect of politically motivated prosecution upon returning to Spain, despite the assurances enshrined in the Amnesty Law of 2024. This situation represents a grave violation of international norms and highlights the systemic nature of repression, and the Working Group's omission of this pertinent issue not only fails to adequately consider this institutional crisis, given its far-reaching implications for the rule of law, but also echoes persistent concerns regarding the inconsistent application of UN mechanisms.

We respectfully urge the Human Rights Council, in its adoption of the Working Group's report, not to overlook these critical omissions. The Council must recognise that Spain has either rejected or neglected key recommendations that directly address these abuses. It is imperative that Spain is reminded of its duty to ensure the full and impartial implementation of the Amnesty Law, to initiate independent inquiries into surveillance abuses, to cease the criminalisation of political dissent related to Catalan aspirations, and to facilitate the safe return of those who have been forced into exile due to politically motivated prosecutions. The Council's attention to these matters will not only uphold the principles of justice and accountability but also reinforce the credibility of international mechanisms in addressing human rights violations across diverse contexts.

---

Justice pour Tous Internationale (JPTi) Consell de la República, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.