

2025 DIAGNOSIS OF THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

**RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
IN THE SPANISH
STATE**



This report has been produced with a coordination team formed by **Alba Llucià and Bernat Aragó (Novact Institute of Nonviolence).**

It was finalised in March 2026 | It has been formatted by: taller@traficantes.net

We are also grateful for the contribution of other expert members of Defender a quien Defiende who collaborate in this report and who share our path in the defence of the right to protest: Cèlia Carbonell (Iridia), Lluís Elias, Esther Fraile and Gabriela López (Sira Centre and Community Action Group), Serlinda Vigara (Ecologistas en Acción), Karlos Castilla (Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya), Sara López (Legal Sol). We would like to extend our gratitude to Marta Verdejo for her support in reviewing the report.

Thanks to the organisations that form part of Defender a quien Defiende which, for a decade, have been meeting monthly to accompany and accompany each other, and which have also participated in the drafting of the report: the Granada Observers Network, the Network for the Observation of Rights in the Context of Protest in Madrid, the Som Defensores platform, ECOAR))), the CGT trade union, the Zaragoza 15-M Civil and Political Rights Group and the Andalusian Association for Human Rights (APDHA).

[[[DEFENDER A QUIEN DEFIENDE

Co-funded by the European Union under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV2024-CHAR-LITI). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

With the support of



[TABLE OF CONTENTS]

1. INTRODUCTION. PROTEST AS A THERMOMETER	3
Cèlia Carbonell, <i>Irídia</i>	
2. REPRESSION IN 2025	5
2.1 METHODOLOGICAL NOTE: HOW TO READ THE DATA	5
2.2 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS	9
Alba Lluçà, <i>Novact</i>	
2.3 CASE STUDY: SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE	26
Bernat Aragó, <i>Novact</i>	
3. NEW AND OLD TOOLS OF REPRESSION	37
3.1. TEN YEARS OF THE GAG LAW	37
Sara López, <i>Legal Sol</i>	
3.2. POLICE ARMAMENT AND USE OF FORCE	40
Cèlia Carbonell, <i>Irídia</i>	
3.3. TECHNOLOGIES OF CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE	44
Cèlia Carbonell, <i>Irídia</i>	
4. PROTESTING IN TIMES OF REACTION	47
Bernat Aragó, <i>Novact</i>	
5. A PSYCHOSOCIAL VIEW IN CONTEXTS OF PROTEST AND REDUCTION OF CIVIC SPACE	51
Lluís Elias y Esther Fraile, <i>Centro Sira</i>	
6. ADVOCACY IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS	54
Karlos Castilla, <i>Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya</i>	
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	56
Cèlia Carbonell, <i>Irídia</i>	
8. ANNEXES	62



[1. INTRODUCTION]

PROTEST AS A THERMOMETER

Cèlia Carbonell, *Írdia - Centre per la defensa dels drets humans*

Writing an introduction on the situation of the right to protest in Spain in 2025 is a difficult task; even more so if it is done at the beginning of 2026, in a context marked by an accelerated - and in many respects global - shift in the political and social order. Precisely for this reason, what is intended here, with all the limitations and difficulties, is not so much an exhaustive record, since there are no official data, but to show a general picture of what is happening in the streets: **a quantitative and qualitative thermometer of the situation of the right to protest in the Spanish state.**

2025 leaves a clear statement: **repression is intensifying and doing so more visibly** and systematically —the more protest and popular mobilisation, the more repression— operating through **two mutually reinforcing channels that fuel the criminalisation of this right.** On the one hand, the criminal route, with investigations, indictments, precautionary measures, and judicial processes that punish not only with convictions but also with the procedure itself: time, uncertainty, wear and tear, and criminalisation. On the other hand, the **administrative route**, which is expanding and becoming normalised through bureaucratic repression, with proposals for sanctions, fines, identification, controls, restrictions on space, and a growing use of bureaucratic and police tools aimed at dissuading and making protesting “payable”. Both routes form the same landscape: **the reduction of civil society space that provokes a discouragement effect** that seeks to demobilise, paralyse and reduce protest through fear and criminalisation, to break the associative, collective and solidarity-based fabric that is articulated and coordinated in the streets.

We are at a turning point. What, for years, was already a danger and we warned about in these reports has been consolidated as the new reality. We live with the continuation of more than two years of genocide in the Gaza Strip, in a profoundly colonial and racist world in *which a mayor can evict 400 people without an alternative and say so publicly in prime time.* We have seen the rise of the extreme right and the rapid implementation of policies that represent a direct setback in rights and freedoms, historically won from popular power, together with an escalation of militarisation (as is happening in the United States with the actions of ICE) and the policing of the space of civil society, which **establishes a society of control that is increasingly present in all areas of daily life.** This control is reflected not only in an increase in police presence on the streets, but also in a whole range of surveillance technologies, from our telephones to the streets and even on public transport. Added to this is the speed of information and the fragility of what is

verifiable in a reality that is easily altered through social networks, making it often difficult to distinguish what is true from what is not. It is the era of disinformation, propaganda manipulation and denialism.

We have seen it in Hungary, Serbia, Morocco, Nepal, Madagascar, Togo, and Kenya; it is a symptom of a real, growing, collective and transnational discontent and fear —led by **Generation Z**— of a future of corruption, climate crisis, unemployment and the collapse of public services. However, once again, this report is intended as a warning of a problem that is not distant or alien, but **a global issue with a direct impact here in Spain**. This is reaffirmed by the exponential increase in repressive cases of the fundamental right to protest reported in this report: 66.7% more than in 2024 and twice as many as in 2023.

We live in a world where the right to **protest is criminalised rather than protected**. Civic space is narrowing, becoming more conditioned and less free; police presence on the streets is increasing, and macro-devices are deployed to repress small gatherings. There is also evidence of preferential treatment of extreme right-wing groups by the police, whereas they are tougher on those who demonstrate against them. At the same time, there is a proliferation of civic-mindedness plans and ordinances which, in the words of some of their promoters, seek to “put the city in order”, but which in practice entrench and reinforce racism as a systemic problem in the Spanish state.

As every year, this report is based on **what we observe and document both on the streets and in the courts**, as well as on the high number of sanctions imposed by the Gag Law (ley mordaza), which continue to be recorded and even toughened, precisely ten years after a law that should never have been passed. Specific cases that illustrate persistent trends and dynamics have long been established as models of repression.

The platform *Defender a quien Defiende* works in this way, in part, because **there is no complete and accessible public register** that allows us to systematically know what is happening. The lack of information and transparency is not neutral. Institutional and police opacity hinders accountability, weakens the mechanisms for complaints, redress, and democratic control, and feeds impunity. This also erodes civil society’s confidence in the exercise of its fundamental rights.

At the same time, 2025 has also been the year of the consolidation of a **collective response**. If the previous year was already notable for the coordination between movements in different parts of the territory, in 2025, this articulation has been strengthened and expanded. A clear example is the popular organisation, city after city, of actions to boycott the **Vuelta Ciclista** (Tour of Spain), in protest against the participation of a team representing Israel in a context of sustained genocide against the Palestinian people.

This report notes that protest is not rewarded but persecuted. However, it is not limited to denunciation; it aspires to become a collective tool to strengthen, share, and make visible strategies that allow us to confront it in an organised manner, placing value on the construction of a strong, combative, and coordinated associative fabric.

[CHAPTER 2]

REPRESSION IN 2025

2.1 METHODOLOGICAL NOTES. HOW TO READ THE DATA IN THIS REPORT

The data presented in this chapter come from the *Red Malla* observatory, the tool for monitoring rights violations in contexts of protest promoted by *Defender a quien Defiende (DqD)*.

Independent monitoring by civil society is an internationally recognised and endorsed practice. The *OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)* considers it an essential tool to promote respect for and protection of human rights in contexts of protest and has developed a [specific methodological framework](#) to support this work. DqD's methodology is in this tradition of systematic, independent observation based on international standards..

RIGHT TO PROTEST

The right to protest is not codified as such in the main international human rights treaties. However, the term is widely used to encompass a group of fundamental rights and individual freedoms, the aim of which is to safeguard the same common good: plurality in the political participation of society. For this reason, *DqD* identifies it as both a plural and a vector right, as it acts as a catalyst to guarantee the exercise and realisation of other fundamental rights.

These include, principally, the **right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of information** and the **right of association**. These rights are closely interrelated and, in practice, are often exercised simultaneously. For example, by participating in a peaceful protest, a person may be exercising at the same time their right to assembly, expression, association and participation in public affairs.

This interdependence means that, in many cases, violations linked to protest cannot be attributed in isolation to just one of these rights but affect the whole system of guarantees that protect political participation and collective expression in society.

From a historical perspective, the possibility of expressing disagreement with the actions of public authorities and other centres of power has been a central element in the conquest and defence of numerous human rights. In this sense, the right to protest occupies a

particularly relevant position within the system, as it allows social dissent to be channelled, protecting the social advances achieved and opening space for new collective demands.

In Spain, **there is no official mechanism for counting or systematising violations of the right to protest.** For this reason, the data presented here is an X-ray based on the cases detected and documented by the platform, without the possibility of contrasting it with equivalent institutional data.

The documentation of the cases is based on a combination of **primary and secondary sources:** direct observation by monitoring networks in the field, testimonies and documentation provided by affected people, as well as the systematic monitoring of media and social networks of social movements. The inclusion of a case in the observatory requires an internal review according to the methodological criteria defined by the platform. This process includes the comparison of available information and the homogeneous classification of violations according to pre-established typologies.

In this sense, the figures collected do not represent the totality of the violations that have occurred, but only those that have been documented and verified by means of defined methodological standards. The **real volume of violations is necessarily higher**, especially in contexts where the people affected do not have support networks or the capacity to activate complaint and accompaniment mechanisms.

UNITS OF MEASUREMENT: CASES, VIOLATIONS AND AFFECTED PERSONS

This report distinguishes between three units of measurement: **cases, violations and affected persons**, each of which serves a specific analytical purpose.

A case is a concrete episode linked to a protest or situation related to the exercise of the right to protest (e.g. a demonstration, an eviction or a judicial procedure resulting from a mobilisation). As a rule, the same demonstration constitutes a single case, even if several police or administrative interventions take place during said demonstration. If the same court case undergoes changes or evolves over the course of a year, or if there are several stages of the same (trial and judgment, for example), it counts as a single case. However, when within the same episode there are violations directed specifically against groups with a differentiated status, such as media professionals in the exercise of their informative work, they are recorded as autonomous cases for analytical purposes to identify specific patterns of affectation.

A **violation** is a specific act or intervention carried out by a public authority or by a private actor that affects or restricts the exercise of one of the rights that make up the right to protest. For example, a police charge, an arrest, an administrative fine or the initiation of legal proceedings because of participation in a mobilisation. A single case may include several violations when, within the same episode, there are different actions that affect these rights.

Affected persons are counted per case and per violation. If the same person suffers several violations within the same case (e.g. is identified and detained), they are counted as

one affected person in that case. When precise information on the number of persons affected is not available, a conservative approach is applied and the minimum verifiable, i.e. one person, is counted. For example, if there is a disproportionate police charge against a group of people, but no injuries are reported, it will count as one person. If a person is affected in different cases, it is counted per case.

TYPES OF VIOLATIONS

Violations are classified according to a system of predefined typologies, applied homogeneously in all territories to ensure analytical consistency and inter-annual comparability. These typologies make it possible to identify both direct interventions on individuals and structural forms of restriction of the right to protest. The typologies used are as follows:

- **Fine:** imposition of administrative sanctions.
- **Identification:** police request for identification in the context of a protest.
- **Attacks on physical and moral integrity** include aggression, disproportionate use of force, charges, searches and frisks, unlawful beatings, threats, insults, coercion or harassment.
- **Detention:** formal deprivation of liberty.
- **Infiltration:** includes cases of prolonged police infiltration of social movements and the covert presence of plainclothes officers at demonstrations or activities in social spaces.
- **Judicial repression:** encompasses the different phases of criminal proceedings arising from participation in protests (denunciation, prosecution, trial, conviction), including situations of “bench punishment”.
- **Censorship:** limitations or direct interference in the exercise of freedom of expression and information related to protest.
- **Detention / Circulation:** temporary limitations on freedom of movement without formalisation of detention, as well as restrictions on the free movement of persons or demonstrations.
- **Bureaucratic repression:** administrative obstacles, bureaucratic hurdles or disproportionate demands that make it difficult to organise and participate in demonstrations.
- **Unidentified police:** actions by officers without visible identification numbers or in breach of identification obligations.
- **Other:** category used only when the violation does not fit into any of the above typologies.

TERRITORIAL COVERAGE AND MONITORING BIAS

The geographical distribution of cases does not necessarily reflect the actual distribution of repression in Spain as a whole, but rather *DqD*'s monitoring capacity. Historically, Catalonia and Madrid have concentrated most of the documented cases. This can be explained by the intensity of mobilisation in these territories (where the most populated cities are

located) and by the platform's greater organisational presence. As the network has expanded its territorial implantation, cases have begun to be registered in new autonomous communities. In 2025, *DqD* had active observation and/or monitoring networks in Madrid, Andalusia, Galicia and Catalonia.

PERIOD OF COVERAGE AND TEMPORAL INCLUSION CRITERIA

The report includes both violations that occurred during 2025 and those in the form of court rulings (sentences, convictions or other decisions) handed down during the year, even if the events that gave rise to them date back to previous years. This criterion makes it possible to offer a complete picture of the repressive impact in force in the year analysed, including its deferred judicial effects over time.

2.2 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Alba Llucià, *NOVACT Institute of Nonviolence*

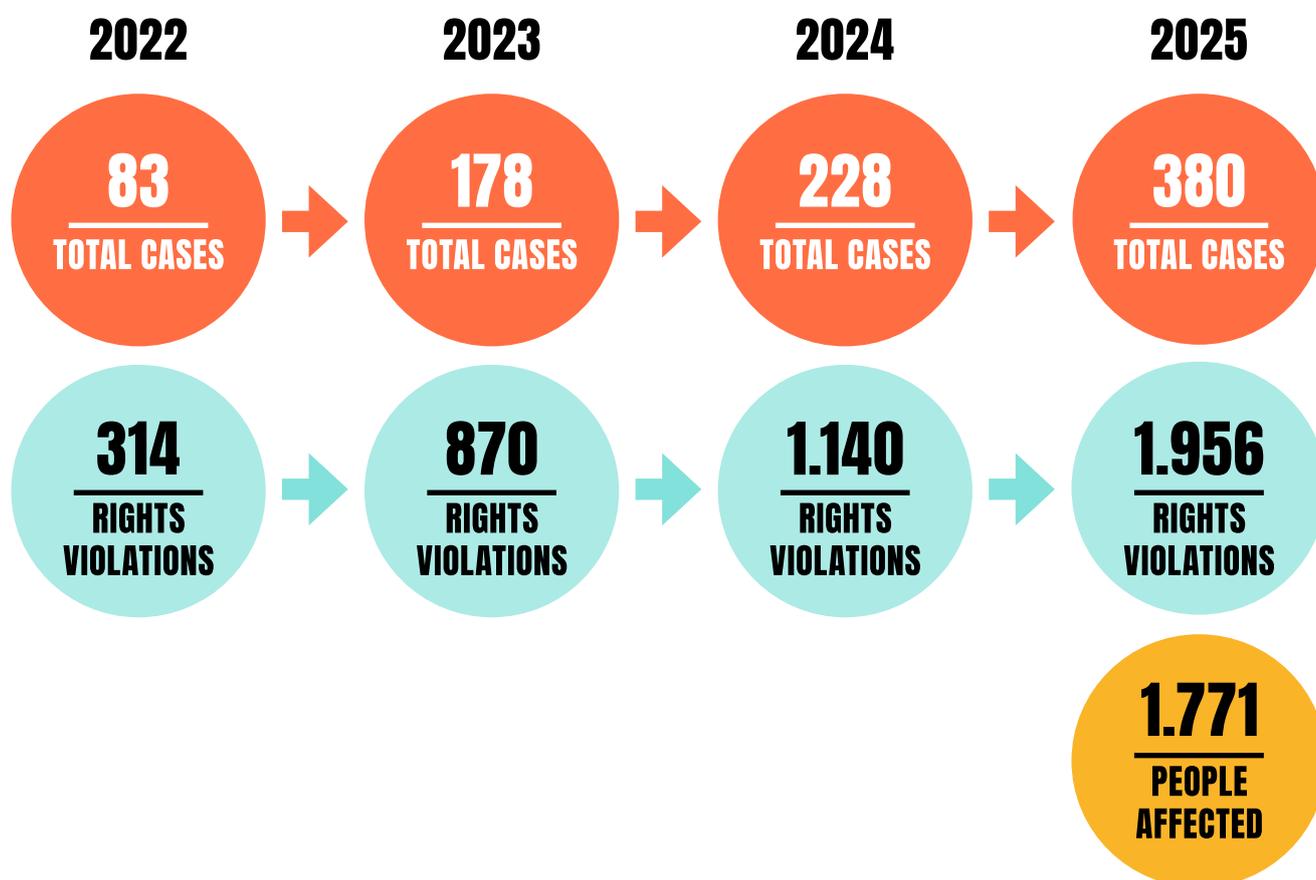
The data collected in this year's analysis point to an intensification and reconfiguration of the forms of repression of the right to protest in Spain. The increase in the number of cases is accompanied by a change in the mechanisms used, with a greater presence of coercive interventions, judicialization and the participation of private actors.

CASES AND TYPES OF VIOLATIONS

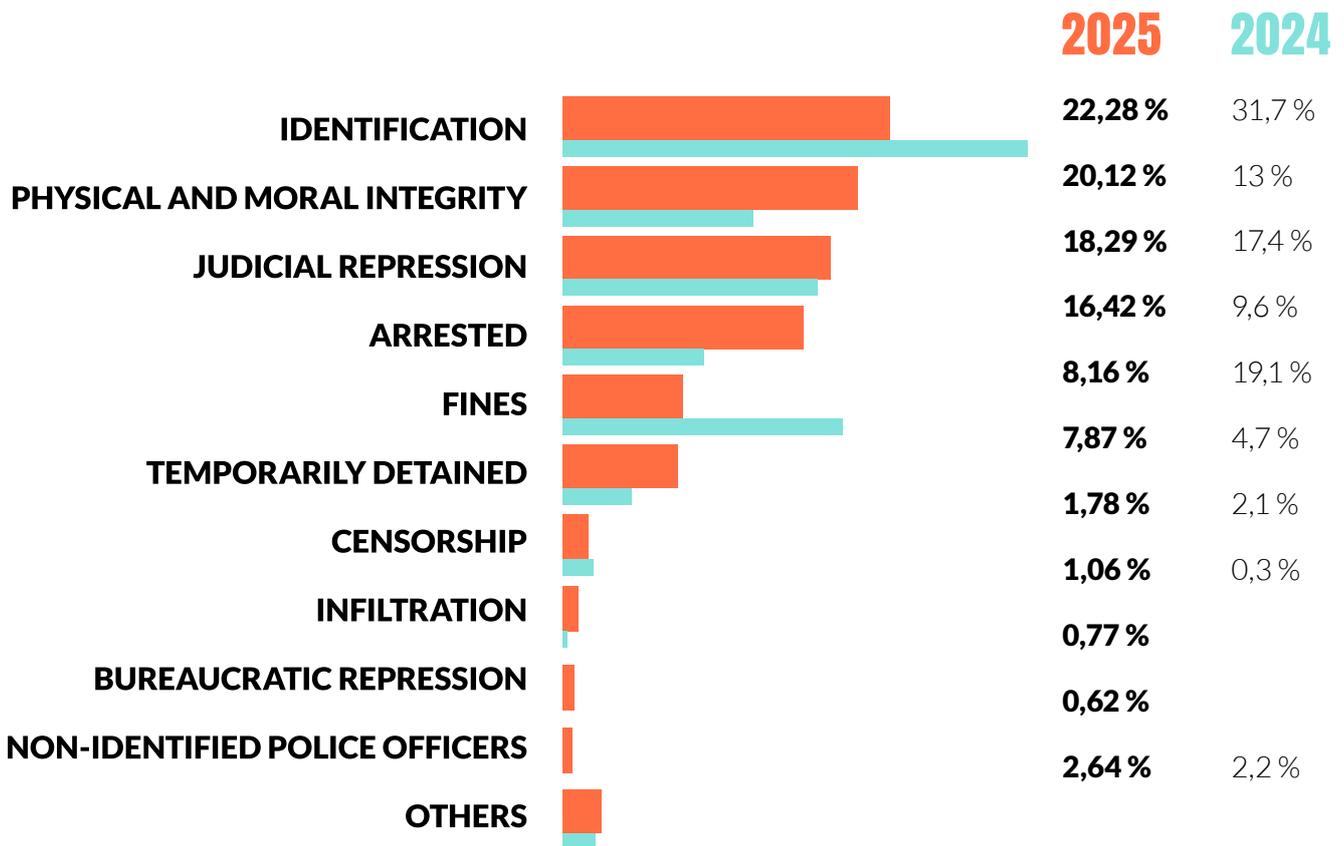
During the year 2025, a total of **380 cases**, **1956 violations** and **1771 people affected** in the context of protest have been systematised.

The total volume of cases in which violations of the right to protest were detected grew by 66.7% compared to the previous year and more than doubled compared to 2023. Although part of this increase can be attributed to the progressive growth of the network's monitoring capacity (a trend observed over the last few years), the quantitative evolution also reflects a shared perception among collectives and social movements of an intensification of the repression of the right to protest in Spain.

HISTORY OF CASES, VIOLATIONS AND PERSONS



TYPES OF VIOLATIONS



This increase is not only quantitative. 2025 is characterised by an intensification of repression, marked by a greater use of force, an increase in the use of highly serious criminal offences and a consolidation of judicial and private strategies of attrition.

Whereas in 2024, stops and administrative sanctions predominated (accounting for more than 50% of the total number of recorded cases), in 2025, the most intense interventions gain weight: **violations against physical and moral integrity** (147 cases with 419 people affected) and **arrests** (76 cases with 324 people affected), which now account for more than one-third of the detected violations. The chapter “[3.2 Police Weapons and Use of Force](#)” analyses this trend in more detail.

AREAS OF MOBILISATION

The analysis shows a significant reconfiguration of the map of mobilisations and associated repressive interventions. In contrast to 2024, when the distribution of cases was more dispersed, in 2025, there is a **clear concentration in** three main areas: **Solidarity with Palestine** (90 cases), **Housing and squatting** (67 cases) and **Antifascism** (61 cases). Between the three of them, they account for almost 60% of the total number of cases registered.

This is not only a quantitative increase, but also a structural reorganisation of the spaces where the exercise of the right to protest is under tension. Repression appears to be more focused on conflicts that cut across the central political and social debates of the moment.

The **Palestine Solidarity** movement is the axis with the highest number of repressive interventions for the second consecutive year, accounting for approximately a quarter of all cases (24.7%). Although the absolute number increases, its relative weight remains stable, indicating that this is not a cyclical phenomenon but a consolidated area of intervention.

In 2025, this axis includes both police interventions in demonstrations and rallies -with actions of containment, use of force, identifications and arrests- and the subsequent activation of administrative or judicial mechanisms linked to participation in these mobilisations. The detailed analysis of this axis is developed in the specific chapter “**2.3. Case Study: Solidarity with Palestine**”, where recent transformations in the forms of police, administrative and judicial action associated with these mobilisations are examined.

The **Housing and squatting** axis consolidates its position as the area with the second highest number of cases, concentrating 17.6% of the total. Its relative weight confirms the growing centrality of the housing emergency on the current conflict map.

The cases recorded include police interventions in evictions —charges, oversized devices, arrests during attempts to paralyse and **surveillance by drones**— as well as repressive actions beyond the moment of the event: administrative sanctions linked to rallies and protests, criminal proceedings arising from housing mobilisations and macro-cases against activists. This axis also includes episodes of criminalisation and violence in the context of evictions carried out by private actors (eviction companies or private security companies such as “Desokupa”), as well as defamation and harassment campaigns against neighbourhood leaders.

Antifascism emerges as one of the most significant changes of the year, accounting for 16% of the cases when in 2024 its presence had been residual. This irruption introduces a new relevant focus in the general structure of mobilisation, and is framed in a context of rallies against the extreme right, directed both against political formations such as Vox and *Aliança Catalana*, and against the public presence of ultra-agitators such as Vito Quiles and Macarena Olona, as well as against the appearance of organisations of neo-Nazi ideology such as *Núcleo Nacional*.

The anti-fascist sphere also presents a relevant particularity: it is not limited to interventions in the context of demonstrations or rallies but includes episodes that affect the exercise of freedom of expression, association and non-discrimination outside the strict context of public protests. In this area, aggressions, threats, defamation and harassment campaigns on social networks, attacks against social spaces (including graffiti with Nazi symbols and even the **throwing of explosive devices**) and other incidents are described in **chapter 4**. In several of these cases, the groups affected were not carrying out direct anti-fascist activity at the time but were targeted because of their ideological or associative profile. This widening of the perimeter of repression is significant from the perspective of the right to protest, insofar as it shows that the effects are not only produced at the moment of public mobilisation, but can also be projected onto the organisational, social and community environment of those who exercise these freedoms.

Beyond these three main axes, the map shows other areas with a specific presence. **Freedom of expression** accounts for 7.37 % of the cases and includes episodes linked to the

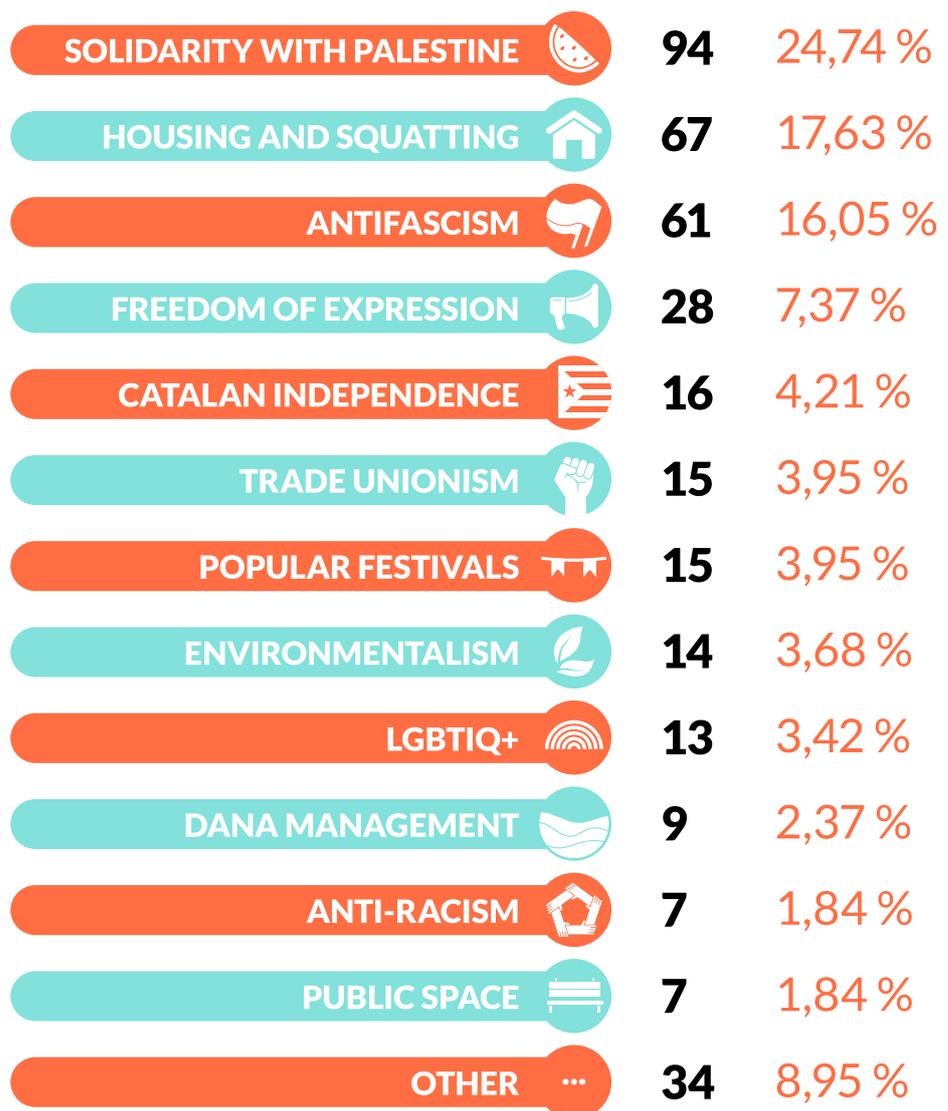
circulation of discourse in cultural spaces, digital environments and journalistic practice, as well as the activation of legal proceedings against satirical or critical content. **Catalan Independence** represents 4.2 %, while **Trade Unionism** and **Popular festivals** represent around 3 - 4 % each.

Environmentalism drops significantly compared to previous years, from being the most repressed movement in 2023 to representing a reduced percentage in 2025, which can be attributed to a lower mobilisation because of the chilling effect of the specific repression campaign suffered by the environmental movement announced in the 2022 and 2023 reports.

Other areas with a specific presence include **LGBTIQ+** violations, protests related to the **management of the DANA** (which appears as a distinct category for the first time), **anti-racism**, and certain violations related to the use of public space.

The **“Other”** category groups together 8.95% of the cases and includes mobilisations that do not fall into a single predominant category or that appear more occasionally throughout the year. These include protests linked to the student and educational sphere, associations, feminism, health or tourism, as well as mobilisations related to sports fans, Basque independence, anti-militarism, internationalism and anti-racism.

CASES PER AREAS OF MOBILISATION



THE MOST COMMON VIOLATIONS ACCORDING TO AREAS OF MOBILISATION

If up to now we have observed a map of actions that violate the right to protest, the following analysis allows us to identify the differentiated models of intervention associated with each area of mobilisation. The cross-referencing of **violations** and **areas of mobilisation** shows that the repressive response is not homogeneous but rather adopts different profiles depending on the reason for the protest. Not all mobilisations receive the same type of intervention, neither in intensity nor in nature.

In the case of the **Palestine Solidarity** movement, the intervention profile reproduces the general average, with a high presence of actions affecting physical and moral integrity, as well as identifications and subsequent administrative procedures, forming a mixed pattern of intervention that combines direct police action in the public space with the subsequent activation of administrative and judicial sanctioning mechanisms.

In the area of **Antifascism**, there is a clear over-representation of acts affecting **physical and moral integrity** –including police charges, containment devices and actions involving injured persons– as well as a significantly higher number of actions by **unidentified officers**, compared with the average for the group of areas analysed. This pattern shapes an intervention profile characterised by greater coercive intensity and less operational transparency compared to other areas of mobilisation, making it a particularly harsh profile within the set of cases analysed.

Likewise, Antifascism shows a significant presence of collective arrests and subsequent prosecution, which suggests a continuity between action on the ground and the deployment of subsequent criminal mechanisms. The case known as “The Zaragoza Six¹” is a paradigmatic example of this dynamic. Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, **questioned the proportionality of the sentences imposed** and pointed to shortcomings in the evidentiary assessment, as well as the risk of a deterrent effect on the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly. The case culminated in 2025 with the granting of a partial pardon, which is evidence of the legal and social controversy that arose.

Finally, it should be noted that, unlike other mobilisations where intervention is mainly concentrated at the time of the protest, in Antifascism there is also significant interaction with private actors (including aggression, threats or harassment campaigns) which coexist with police action and contribute to an extended risk environment.

In conflicts linked to **housing and squatting**, the combination of **arrests** and **judicial repression** stands out. The proportion of cases involving deprivation of liberty is higher than the general average, as is the weight of subsequent judicial proceedings. This suggests a model of intervention that is not limited to the immediate control of the event but is prolonged over time through the activation of criminal and administrative proceedings, generating a more lasting impact on the people affected.

1. Following an anti-fascist demonstration in 2019, six young people were arrested and subsequently sentenced to prison terms for public disorder and assault on authority, in proceedings that dragged on for years.

In addition to this, there has been a significant volume of subsequent prosecutions: macro-cases against activists, accumulated requests for prison sentences that reach particularly high figures in collective proceedings, trials opened years after the events, and fines imposed under the Gag Law amounting to tens of thousands of euros. There have also been attempts at criminalisation, such as the [investigation opened by the Mossos d'Esquadra in Catalonia against the housing movement](#) by the “violent extremism” unit, as well as [undercover police presence](#) in social spaces linked to the movement.

A particularly significant case was the eviction of the former high school B9 in Badalona, carried out on 17 December by the Mossos d'Esquadra. This operation, the largest eviction in the whole of Spain, affected an informal settlement that housed around 400 people, mainly vulnerable migrants, and resulted in mass arrests and 18 detentions. The operation left hundreds of people homeless in the middle of a rainy and windy storm. Beyond their immediate seriousness, episodes of this magnitude act as a catalyst for collective mobilisation in defence of the right to housing. This type of intervention not only directly affects the evicted people, but also acts as a catalyst for collective organisation, generating support networks, protest rallies, articulation of neighbourhood platforms and greater media visibility for housing demands. However, they also produced the opposite effect, as groups of neighbours tried to prevent the affected people from attending.

From the perspective of the right to protest, it is particularly relevant to guarantee the protection of the mobilisation associated with these episodes. When the institutional response adopts high intensity forms (mass identifications, arrests or activation of criminal proceedings), its effects can extend beyond the specific event and generate an inhibiting impact on future participation. On the contrary, ensuring conditions that allow for the collective expression of dissent makes it easier for social conflicts linked to basic needs, such as access to housing, to be channelled democratically.

In the case of **Catalan independence**, **judicial repression** is clearly over-represented, while violations linked to the use of physical force are under-represented. The resulting profile is predominantly procedural: intervention is articulated more through legal mechanisms than through direct physical coercion, which points to a strategy centred on judicialization as the main tool of repression.

In contrast, violations of movements associated with **freedom of expression** are associated with acts classified as **censorship**, together with a significant weight of **judicialization**. This pattern is consistent with the symbolic and communicative dimension of this axis of mobilisation, in which intervention is not so much directed at controlling the physical space as at restricting the content, the message or its dissemination.

A paradigmatic example of this dynamic is the case of the satirical magazine *Mongolia*, which has been the target of successive lawsuits over one of its covers depicting a Christmas nativity scene. Over the last few years, the proceedings were reopened on several occasions until, in October 2025, the judge agreed to the **definitive closure of the last pending complaint**. Although the result was the closure of the case, the temporary prolongation of the judicial process and the reiteration of legal actions show the potential deterrent effect of this type of litigation. Beyond the conviction (which in this case did not occur), the impact is projected on the economic costs, reputational damage and sustained pressure on the affected environment. This type of action is part of a broader trend of using the judicial system to put pressure on or wear down those who exercise public criticism, a phenomenon that is analysed in greater detail in the analysis of those responsible for violations.

In the area of **popular festivals**, there is a high presence of **bureaucratic repression**, understood as administrative obstacles, disproportionate demands or organisational obstacles. This pattern is associated with urban and public space plans that prioritise security and administrative management, such as the Urban Development Plans of Barcelona (*Pla Endreça* and the *Civic Ordinance*), which show how the control of public space can restrict community self-management. Considering that many popular festivals function as spaces of community self-management and social organisation, where neighbourhood, cultural and political collectives carry out activities in public space, administrative limitations affecting their organisation have a direct impact on their capacity for self-management and organisation. These restrictions have a dissuasive effect on the exercise of fundamental rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, which are directly linked to the right to protest.

Overall, the data suggest the existence of differentiated patterns of intervention on the right to protest depending on the type of mobilisation. Although no uniform strategy can be affirmed, the analysis allows us to identify several relatively consistent patterns. On the one hand, a **model of coercive police intervention**, characterised using force, arrests and control devices in the public space, especially present in politically confrontational mobilisations. On the other hand, there is a **model of judicial attrition**, based on the opening of prolonged criminal proceedings and macro-cases against activists. Added to this is an **administrative or bureaucratic model**, based on sanctions, organisational restrictions and bureaucratic obstacles that hinder mobilisation. Finally, in some areas, there is the emergence of hybrid dynamics that combine police action with the intervention of private actors.

INTENSITY OF THE VIOLATION COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE

Violations collected	Fine	Identification	Physical and moral integrity	Arrested	Infiltration	Judicial repression	Censorship	Temporary detention	Bureaucratic repression	Non-identified police	Other
Solidarity with Palestine	+0,60%	+2,70%	+0,50%	+3,30%	+1,00%	-9,50%	+2,80%	-0,50%	-1,50%	+0,60%	+0,10%
Housing and squatting	+2,70%	+0,40%	-1,60%	+7,80%	+0,80%	+5,30%	-6,20%	-2,80%	-3,10%	-0,40%	-2,90%
Antifascism	+2,40%	-3,00%	+9,90%	-8,60%	-1,30%	+2,90%	-7,30%	-	-1,90%	+4,70%	+2,20%
Freedom of expression	-1,60%	-4,90%	+4,10%	-4,90%	-1,30%	+7,60%	+8,90%	+3,70%	-3,10%	-2,50%	-6,10%
Catalan independence	-4,80%	+3,70%	-23,20%	-9,60%	-3,70%	+25,10%	+7,70%	-0,90%	-3,10%	-2,50%	+3,90%
Trade unionism	-4,80%	+9,50%	+1,00%	+6,30%	-1,30%	-6,60%	+1,10%	-1,80%	+1,10%	-2,50%	-2,00%
Popular Festivals	-1,20%	-0,60%	-13,90%	-3,90%	-1,30%	-4,20%	+3,40%	-2,40%	+18,40%	-2,50%	+8,20%
TOTAL	4,80%	11,30%	28,20%	14,60%	1,30%	14,90%	7,30%	5,90%	3,10%	2,50%	6,10%

PERPETRATORS OF VIOLATIONS

The analysis of who is responsible for the violations shows that the right to protest continues to be affected mainly by **police forces** (54.5%). Within this group, the Mossos d'Esquadra (25.8%) and the National Police (22.6%) stand out as the bodies responsible for the highest proportion of violations. This pattern reinforces the trend observed in previous years, where police forces represent the main actor in the repression of protests. The chapters of the report “[3.2 Police Weapons and Use of Force](#)” and “[3.3 Control and Surveillance Technologies](#)” place special emphasis on police repression mechanisms and their interconnection with new technologies.

In this context, non-compliance with police identification regulations persists, something which has already been reported in previous reports. The presence of officers without a visible identification number, mainly the Police Operational Number (NOP), or the use of non-uniformed police officers in operations continues to be a recurrent practice documented by the different observation networks. This practice is particularly worrying because it fuels impunity and weakens accountability mechanisms in the face of disproportionate use of force.

In several territories, there is also a trend towards the normalisation of an intensive police presence in public spaces. This presence takes the form of preventive macro-devices, generalised controls and police deployments that are disproportionate to the size of the demonstrations. Beyond occasional interventions in protest contexts, this type of action contributes to consolidating a model of surveillance that seeks to redefine public space by extending the perimeter of control over social, cultural or festive activities with a dissuasive effect on the exercise of fundamental rights.

Three new cases of prolonged police infiltration of social movements were uncovered during 2025, in addition to the nine cases uncovered since 2022.

In Madrid, the case of an agent who, under the false identity of **Nieves López Medina**, allegedly participated in environmental groups such as *Rebelión o Extinción* and *Fridays for Future* for several months has been made public. In Lleida, an agent of the National Police under the false name of **Joan Llobet** remained infiltrated for approximately two years in social activist and *Esquerra Independentista* groups such as the *Ateneu Cooperatiu La Baula*, the *Sindicat d'Estudiants dels Països Catalans (SEPC)* or *Endavant - OSAN*, participating in meetings and internal activities. A third case, uncovered in Barcelona, is that of a National Police officer who, under the fictitious identity of **Belén Hammad Gómez**, infiltrated various spaces for two years. As described in chapter “2.3 Case Study: Solidarity with Palestine”, **Belén Hammad** infiltrated the solidarity movement with Palestine and the *NOVACT Institute* (a member of *DqD*), before then entering spaces of the *Esquerra Independentista*, such as the *Casal Popular Tres Voltes Rebel* in Nou Barris and the *Endavant - OSAN* organization, accessing organisational structures and militant networks.

Such actions have particularly serious implications for freedom of association, privacy, personal data protection and the exercise of the right to protest. Prolonged infiltration erodes the internal confidence of movements, generates a collective impact that is difficult to quantify and can produce long-lasting deterrent effects on political and social participation. The repetition of these cases points to a persistent practice whose full extent remains unclear. Added to this is the lack of institutional transparency regarding the criteria for authorisation, supervision and control of these operations, which reinforces concerns in terms of democratic guarantees, accountability and effective control of police actions. Collectives that have emerged as a result of these cases —such as the initiative —*Acció contra l'espionatge d'Estat*— have promoted public campaigns denouncing the psychological, relational and political impact of these covert operations, linking them to the consequences of torture and calling for effective mechanisms of investigation and accountability.

UNCOVERED INFILTRATIONS IN 2025

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<p>BELÉN HAMMAD GÓMEZ BARCELONA Palestinian Community of Catalonia Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel (CPCI) Institut NOVACT de Noviolència Casal Popular 3 Voltes Rebel Endavant - OSAN</p>						
	<p>JOAN LLOBET GARCIA LLEIDA La Baula Cooperative Athenaeum Student's Union of the Catalan Countries (SEPC) PAH Lleida Extinction Rebellion Lleida Endavant - OSAN</p>					
					<p>NIEVES LÓPEZ MEDINA MADRID Extinction Rebellion No a la Tala Fridays for Future</p>	

INFILTRATED AGENTS UNCOVERED SINCE 2022

2012-2023	MARTA	MADRID	Mothers Against Repression, El Laboratorio Social Centre, Coordinadora Antifascista.
2020-2023	JUANCAR	MADRID	La Fabrika de Vallecas, District 14, CPK La Bankarrota.
2020-2023	MARÍA	MADRID	District 104, Anti-repressive Movement of Madrid (MAR).
2015-2021	SERGIO	MADRID	Movimiento 15M, Anti-repressive Movement of Madrid (MAR), District 14.
2020-2023	MARÍA	GIRONA	Òmnium Cultural, CUP, Ateneu Popular Salvadora Catà, Federació d'Entitats Socioculturals de Salt, Associació No al Racisme Salt/Girona.
2022	MAVI	MADRID	CSOA La Animososa, Extinction Rebellion, Futuro Vegetal.
2020-2023	RAMÓN	VALÈNCIA	Cuidem Benimaclet, Entre Barris, CSOA l'Horta, La Garrofera, CSOA La Gamberra.
2020-2023	DANIEL	BARCELONA	La Cinètica, Kasa de la Muntanya, Can Masdeu, Can Batlló, Ateneu l'Harmonia, La Comunal (Barcelona), La Lokomotiva (l'Hospitalet de Llobregat).
2020-2023	MARC	BARCELONA	Sindicat d'Estudiants dels Països Catalans (SEPC), Resistim al Gòtic, Casal Popular Lina Òdena.

Alongside police forces, **public and judicial institutions** play an important role, accounting for 26.3% of cases (111 cases). The judicialization of protests continues to be a structural phenomenon: the violations associated with criminal proceedings, administrative sanctions and the activation of judicial mechanisms not only accompany the intervention on the ground, but in many cases prolong it for years. The actions of the courts, public prosecutors and public administrations thus form a repressive level different from that of the police, but also relevant, especially in contexts where the institutional response is primarily articulated through the procedural channel.

As we have been pointing out, the sustained use of administrative sanctioning law as a tool for controlling public space is particularly worrying, especially since the entry into force of [Organic Law 4/2015 on the Protection of Citizen Security](#), known as the Gag Law. As developed in Chapter 3.1 “Ten Years of the Gag Law”, the application of this sanctioning framework has consolidated a model of administrative intervention that allows sanctions to be imposed immediately, becoming one of the pillars of the control of public space, where administrative sanctions are consolidated as a mechanism to intervene in the exercise of the right to protest. As stated in chapter “6. Impact on International Human Rights Mechanisms”, this drift has been the subject of concern in recent international evaluations, in which various States and the United Nations Human Rights Committee have urged Spain to review the Public Security Law and guarantee effective respect for the principles of necessity and proportionality in the management of protests.

Of particular concern are the investigations for organisational or criminal group offences targeting social movements in 2025. [Activists of the environmental organisation Futuro Vegetal were charged with “criminal organisation”](#), while six members of *Arran* have been [investigated for damage, harassment and belonging to a “criminal group”](#). In both cases, the charges stem from symbolic protest actions consisting of throwing paint. The use of these criminal charges (usually reserved for complex criminal structures) in the context of protest actions significantly raises the level of criminalisation and places the collective organisation itself under suspicion. Beyond the outcome of the proceedings, the simple use of these criminal offences has a strong deterrent potential on the exercise of fundamental rights.

Throughout 2025, there was also a growing presence of **private actors** in the infringement of the right to protest, accounting for 19.2% of the documented violations. This group includes private security companies and eviction companies that intervene in evictions or generate disturbances in the context of housing mobilisations, as well as ultra-Catholic foundations, political parties and actors linked to the extreme right that promote complaints, legal campaigns or harassment actions against activists and social spaces. Threats and aggressions have also been documented in neighbourhood and anti-fascist contexts promoted by private actors.

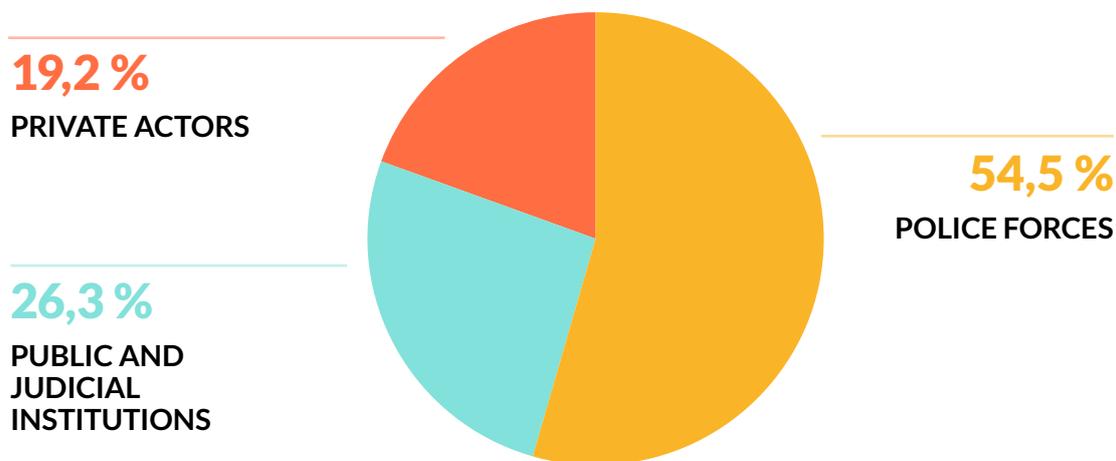
In the field of housing, the intervention of housing companies (such as “*Desokupa*”) introduces dynamics of private intervention in the public space that can contribute to escalating social confrontation. Some of these companies have also acquired a high media visibility and presence in the public debate, which contributes to normalising their role. At the same time, collaboration or proximity with sectors of the police forces has been documented, which reinforces concerns about the growing interaction between private actors and law enforcement agencies. One example occurred in October 2025 in the Puente de Vallecas district

of Madrid, where the presence of an eviction company led to clashes with neighbours and a **police intervention that resulted in 16 people being arrested**. This type of episode reflects how certain private actors can use strategies of pressure or provocation in the public space, in dynamics that sometimes approach forms of confrontation typical of the extreme right and that increase the risk of rights violations in contexts of social mobilisation.

In this context, strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP), understood as legal proceedings promoted with the aim of wearing down, intimidating or dissuading individuals and groups exercising freedom of expression or the right to protest, take on relevance. In 2025, actions promoted by private entities –including ultra-Catholic associations and actors linked to the extreme right– have been documented, which, regardless of the outcome of the proceedings, generate a significant economic, reputational and psychological impact on the people affected. The repetition of complaints and lawsuits in contexts of political criticism or social mobilisation reinforces the trend towards forms of intervention that use the judicial system as a mechanism of indirect pressure on the exercise of fundamental rights.

Overall, the 2025 data show that the documented violations operate at different levels (police, institutional, judicial and private), which reinforces the need for a broad view of the guarantees of the right to protest and the responsibilities associated with its protection.

PERPETRATORS OF VIOLATIONS



TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS

The territorial analysis of the data shows significant differences both in the volume of cases registered and in the predominant areas of mobilisation in each territory. The distribution is not homogeneous and allows us to identify differentiated territorial configurations in the frequency of mobilisations and in the types of interventions documented.²

Catalonia concentrates approximately half of the cases registered during the year (194 out of 380), as well as the largest number of violations and the largest number of people affected. This concentration should also be interpreted considering the greater territorial

2. See annex for segregated data on the territorial distribution of cases.

implantation of the monitoring network, which facilitates a more systematic detection of cases. Mobilisations in solidarity with Palestine, actions linked to the right to housing and squatting, and anti-fascist protests account for a significant part of the documented cases.

Madrid is in second place in terms of the number of cases (61), although at a considerable distance from Catalonia. Among the predominant areas, mobilisations in solidarity with Palestine, protests linked to the right to housing and, to a lesser extent, actions related to freedom of expression stand out.

The **Valencian Community** presents a different dynamic. Although the total number of cases is lower than in Madrid, the volume of violations and people affected is proportionally high, which indicates a higher average intensity per case than in other territories. This result is partly explained by the concentration of mobilisations linked to the management of the DANA during the year, together with other protests related to Antifascism and solidarity with Palestine.

In other territories with a significant presence in the data (such as Andalusia, the Basque Country, Navarre, the Balearic Islands and Galicia), more focused territorial profiles can be observed, where certain areas of mobilisation acquire greater relative weight. Mobilisations in solidarity with Palestine appear as one of the most present axes in several of these territories. In territories with fewer registered cases (such as Aragon, Asturias, Castile and Leon, the Canary Islands, Castille-La Mancha, Cantabria and Murcia), the volume available does not allow us to identify consolidated patterns. In these contexts, the data should be interpreted as indicative of the presence of social mobilisation linked to the exercise of the right to protest, but they do not allow us to establish structural trends.

Below are the **observations made by the territorial monitoring networks**, which complement the quantitative analysis above. These contributions, written by the organisations carrying out the observation in each territory, offer a situated reading of the dynamics recorded during the year.

CATALONIA

One of the most worrying aspects highlighted by *Som Defensores* is the alarming escalation of the non-compliance with the obligation, by the agents of the Mossos d'Esquadra with public order functions (BRIMO and ARRO), to be visibly identified 360° with the Police Operational Number (NOP) in front, behind and on the sides of the helmet –as established by the **regulations of the corps itself**. This non-compliance was documented in most of the mobilisations in which an observation device was activated. In total, six cases were recorded, four of them concentrated between 15 October and 18 November, in the context of persistent mobilisations in support of Palestine. Moreover, it intersects with other equally serious practices, such as the use of pepper spray, which was used on six occasions during the October protests alone. One of these was on 15 October (general strike for Palestine), when the officers who used pepper spray against demonstrators sitting on the ground were not properly identified. On the other hand, thanks to **sustained pressure from more than twenty organisations**, the Barcelona City Council has managed to get the Guàrdia Urbana de Barcelona to rule out, for the time being, **the incorporation of taser guns in the Guàrdia Urbana de Barcelona**.

In addition to this, there has been a considerable increase in police presence on the streets (both by the Mossos d'Esquadra and the Guàrdia Urbana) in the framework of the civic-mindedness ordinances and plans approved in Barcelona (*Pla Endreça* and Ordinance on Civic-mindedness) and in Catalonia (Kanpai Plan). In this context, **disproportionality** has been documented **in the coordinated police macro-operations between different bodies and, on occasions, with private security**. This disproportionality has also been observed in the actions and calls for protests, where, in some cases, more agents have been deployed than demonstrators. There have even been macro-deployments that have militarised and obstructed entire cities, such as Manresa and Badalona. There has also been an increase in their actions in areas such as popular festivals.

MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES IN EACH TERRITORY



CATALONIA

Solidarity with Palestine

Solidarity with Palestine

Antifascism



MADRID

Solidarity with Palestine

Housing and squatting

Freedom of expression



VALENCIAN COMMUNITY

DANA Management

Antifascism

Housing and squatting



ANDALUSIA

Solidarity with Palestine

Antifascism

Housing and squatting



BASQUE COUNTRY

Solidarity with Palestine

Antifascism



NAVARRRE

Popular festivals

Antifascism



BALEARIC ISLANDS

Solidarity with Palestine

Solidarity with Palestine



GALICIA

Solidarity with Palestine

MADRID

The expressions of solidarity with Palestine reached their peak on 14 September, during the last stage of the Vuelta Ciclista. The *Observation Network of Violations in the Context of Protests in Madrid* (*Red de Observación de Derechos en Contexto de Protesta en Madrid*) recorded more than twenty injured demonstrators, four of whom reported serious injuries in disproportionate charges by the National Police. This was not the only occasion on which the right to protest the Genocide in Palestine was limited, but it was undoubtedly the most symbolic.

Movements in defence of the right to housing continue to stop evictions in the most stressed and vulnerable areas of the capital. The accumulation of cases of violations registered in Vallecas stands out, where the fines for the Gag Law are arriving en masse, affecting at least fifty activists and exceeding thousands of euros in fines.

We would also like to highlight that the twelfth case of police infiltration since 2022 was registered in Madrid and seriously affected environmental activists from *Fridays for Future* and the environmental neighbourhood movement “*No a la Tala*”.

GALICIA

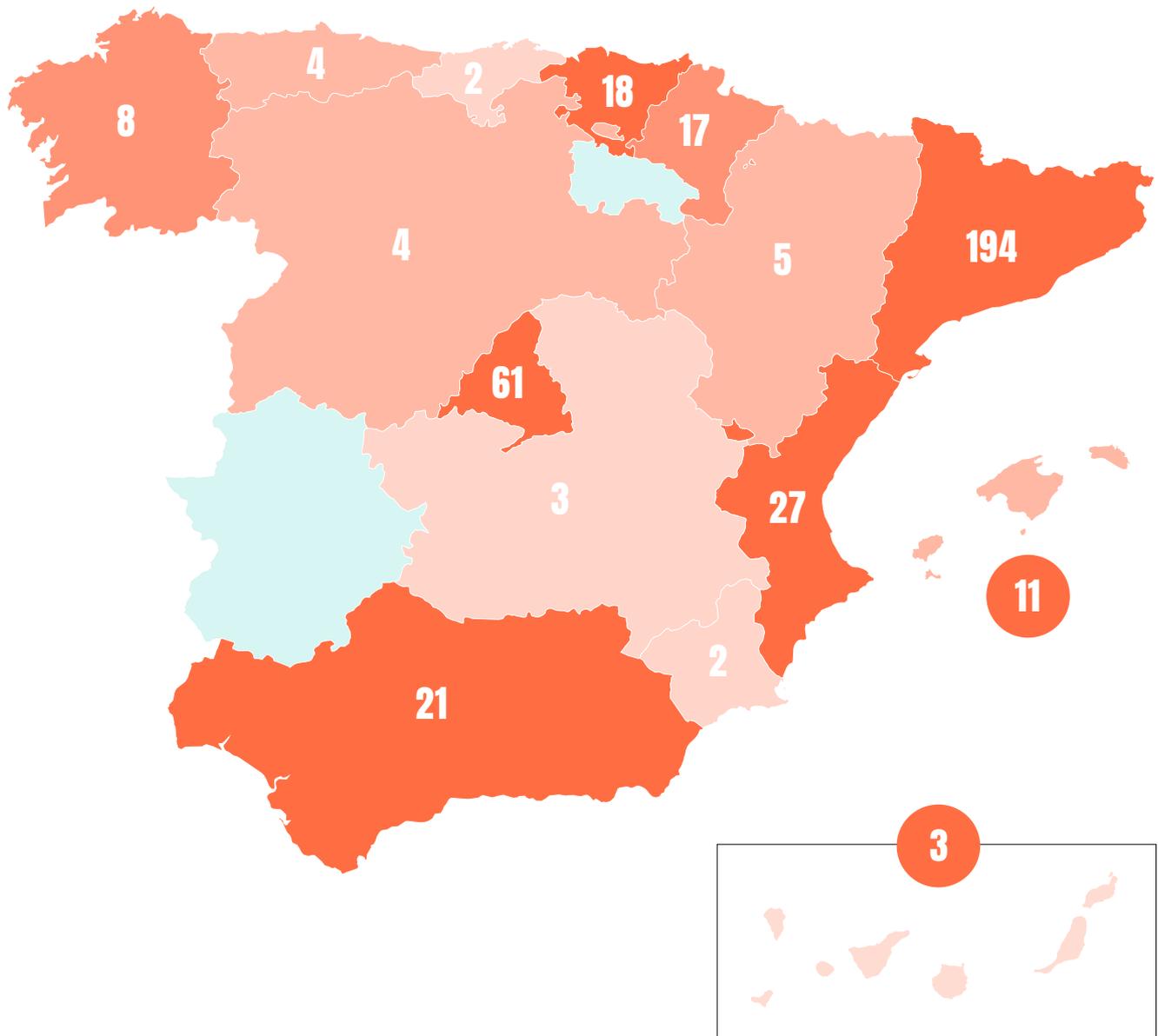
The network of observers in Galicia has observed a specific pattern of repression against Palestine solidarity mobilisations. In contrast to previous years, when the episodes were concentrated in specific moments such as demonstrations or encampments in Santiago, this year the scenarios were diversified, including sporting events, commercial spaces and public roads. The combination of repressive tools included arrests, high administrative sanctions, prosecution of symbolic actions and disproportionate police deployments, with preventive presence and agents infiltrating the demonstrations.

The Vuelta stage in Galicia became the focus of conflict and repression of the year. Mobilisations took place at different points along the route: O Corgo and Monforte de Lemos (Lugo), Alto de San Cosme and other areas. They included the display of Palestinian flags, the reading of manifestos, rallies on the roadside and symbolic sit-ins on the road before the passing of the peloton.

Outside the sporting context, the prosecution of actions linked to the *BDS movement* continued. Eight activists were tried in Vigo for placing stickers on a hypermarket as a symbolic boycott action against companies linked to Israel. This case documents the tendency to treat non-violent protest actions as criminal or administrative offences.

Other interventions that show the extent of repressive practices are, for example, the suspension of a Mägo de Oz concert by the mayor of Vilagarcía de Arousa, after the band made sarcastic comments about drugs and prostitution, or three trade unionists who were assaulted and arrested during a rally in the Port of Vigo (one of them was injured).

CASES REGISTERED BY TERRITORY



● Catalonia	194	● Aragon	05
● Madrid	61	● Asturias	04
● Valencian Community	27	● Castile and Leon	04
● Andalusia	21	● Canary Islands	03
● Basque Country	18	● Castile-La Mancha	03
● Navarre	17	● Cantabria	02
● Balearic Islands	11	● Murcia	02
● Galicia	08		

GRANADA

The most notable violations observed have occurred mainly in demonstrations where there has been a presence of far-right groups and in demonstrations linked to the Palestine solidarity movement, although violations have also been recorded in the context of demonstrations for the right to decent housing. In general, it has been documented that agents of the National Police continue to intervene without visible police identification numbers (TIP and NOP). In addition, identifications have been recorded in police cordons and filters, targeting both observers in the field and people selected apparently at random for racial or activist profiling in police cordons and filters.

Among the most relevant episodes of the year were the close relations observed between National Police officers and members of the AMA Desokupa company during the *eviction of La Madriguera*. Several cases of excessive use of force in police interventions have also been documented, both in the eviction of the social centre —with one demonstrator having his nose broken— and during the talk organised by Macarena Olona, where obstacles to the work of journalists and information professionals were recorded. Likewise, in the context of evictions, particularly serious actions took place, such as the second attempt to evict a mother with five children in Maracena, where a police siege was set up to prevent access to a large square, and finally the eviction was carried out without a court order through the intervention of carpenters and locksmiths who forced the door of the house.

On the other hand, a disproportionate deployment of state security forces and bodies in demonstrations called by far-right groups has also been documented, as well as the use of GoPro-type body cameras and taser devices by the local police, about which there is little public information regarding their regulation and protocols of use. Finally, during various demonstrations, arrests of demonstrators and the processing of proposals for administrative sanctions linked to their participation in protests were recorded.

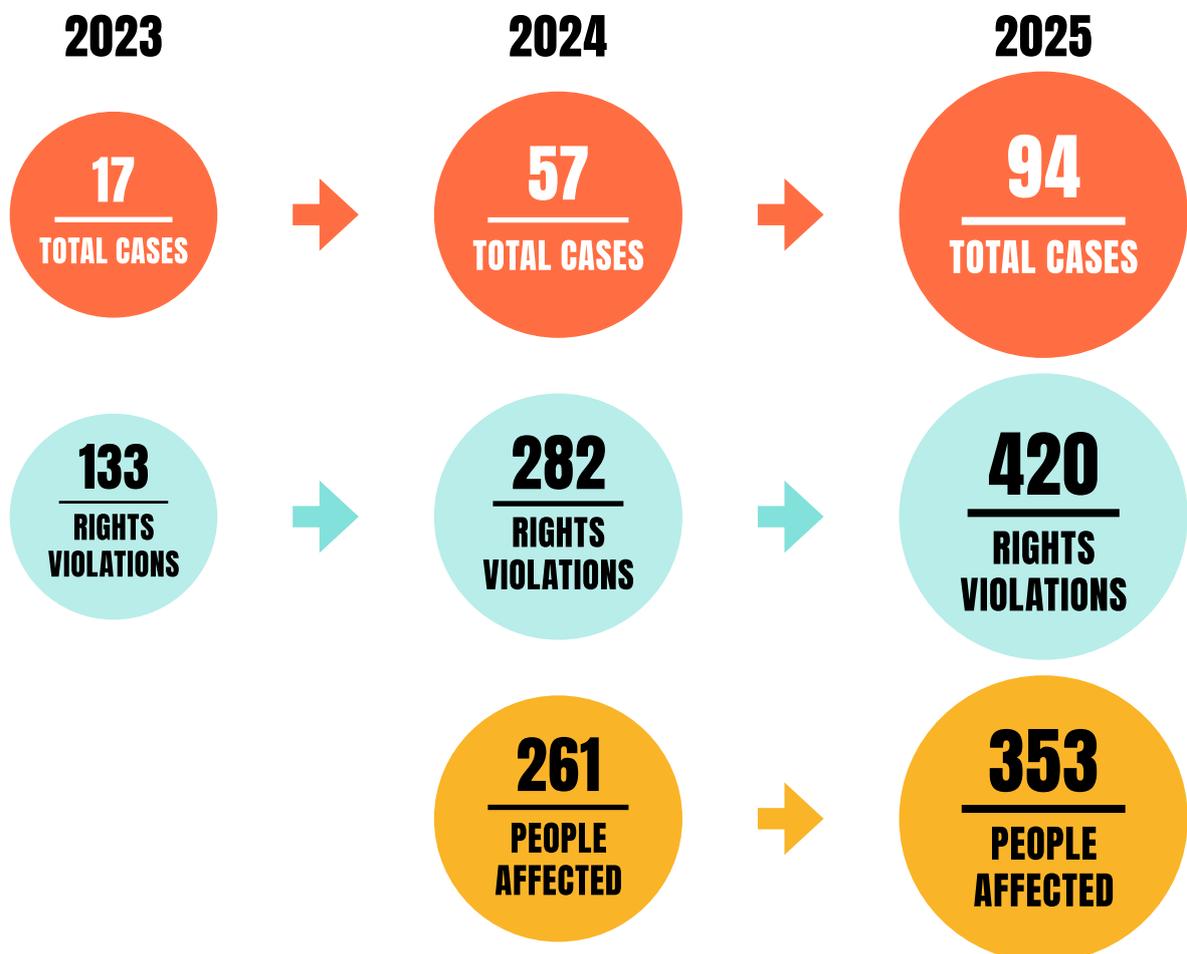
2.3 CASE STUDY: SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

Bernat Aragó, *NOVACT Institute of Nonviolence*

For the third consecutive year, the Palestine Solidarity movement is one of the protagonists of the violation of the right to protest in Spain. 2025 has been the third year of an **ongoing genocide** that continues to hit the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and even beyond the Palestinian borders. Despite the naturalisation of the violence we face as a society, the social movements have not abandoned the streets and have remained mobilised throughout the year. Even after a dubious ceasefire (poorly implemented) and a so-called peace plan imposed by Donald Trump in Gaza, demonstrations and shows of support and solidarity with Palestine have remained constant and unabated.

In a **context of a reactionary upsurge and increasing repression** in the country, the high number of calls and demonstrations in support of Palestine that have been springing up everywhere has also meant, in effect, a restriction in terms of rights. Thus, following the trend that began with the start of the genocide in October 2023, in 2025, **the pro-Palestinian movement is once again the most punished** in terms of repression and rights violations.

CASES OF THE PALESTINE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN 2025 AND EVOLUTION



Defender a quien Defiende has recorded a total of **94 cases of repression** linked to the Palestine Solidarity movement, which translates into 420 violations and 353 people affected. This represents around a quarter of the total number of cases detected in 2025 and **an increase of almost 65%** compared to those registered in the previous year. In 2024, the Palestinian cause was already the most persecuted movement with 57 cases, and in 2023, pro-Palestinian activism was already in fourth place in the annual ranking of repression, with 17 cases in just three months. All the information systematised from 7 October 2023 to the end of 2025 adds up to a total of 168 cases of repression and 835 violations in just over a couple of years.

The persecution suffered by the movement is not exclusive to Spain. Like solidarity, **repression** has also been spreading from country to country and **represents a global trend** that has shaken not only the countries of the Mediterranean region. It has also had a special impact on the European continent and the countries that call themselves the West, from the mass demonstrations in Morocco to the campouts at universities in the United States. In the year in which the *One-Piece* flag has flown in multiple corners of the world, Palestine has once again been at the centre.

However, if there is **one paradigmatic case** that embodies the landscape of repression linked to the Palestinian cause, it is **Germany** –without a doubt. Germany has pioneered restrictions on freedom of expression, the right to assembly and association and the right to demonstrate freely since the beginning of the genocide. From the banning of organisations such as *Samidoun* to the [police raid on a social congress in Berlin in April 2024, to the ban on activists and public figures such as former Greek minister Yanis Varoufakis entering the country](#). In this regard, several groups and organisations in Germany published the report [“Repression of solidarity with Palestine in Germany”](#) in the summer of 2025, with the support of organisations such as *Defender a quien Defiende*. It denounces the extent of unprecedented legal repression in the country: the establishment of a state of violence and securitisation, a narrative aiming to delegitimise the movement, imposed censorship in the social and cultural sector (even going so far as to prohibit the chant ‘*From the River to the Sea*’) and exclusion from the education system. It is paradigmatic that Germany, haunted by the ghosts of the Holocaust, has adopted as a redemption mechanism the swashbuckling defence of a state of Israel that seems bent on repeating history.

Returning to the Spanish mainland, to understand the scope and roots of the repression of the Palestine Solidarity movement, it is necessary to pause for a moment to analyse **Islamophobia as a structural phenomenon** that runs through not only the social aspect but also the very identity of Spain. In [DqD’s 2024 report](#), Yousef M. Ouled highlighted how this “State Islamophobia” is a historical and structural form of institutionalised anti-Muslim racism that permeates public policies, media discourse and police practices both in Spain and in Europe. From the glorification of “race” in 1492 and the expulsion and dehumanisation of the Muslim population in the Peninsula throughout the 17th century, Ouled establishes a genealogy that connects this with current narratives that legitimise exclusion, surveillance and criminalisation: racial profiling, the hijab ban, debates about the burqa, “anti-radicalisation” protocols in schools, forced expulsions and the systematic linking of

Islam, terrorism and the threat to national security. All this in a country that, despite the recent regularisation resulting from the tireless effort of hundreds of thousands of migrant and anti-racist activists, **turns its borders into a morgue and citizenship into a privilege and a mechanism of exclusion.**

TABLE OF VIOLATIONS OF THE PALESTINE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

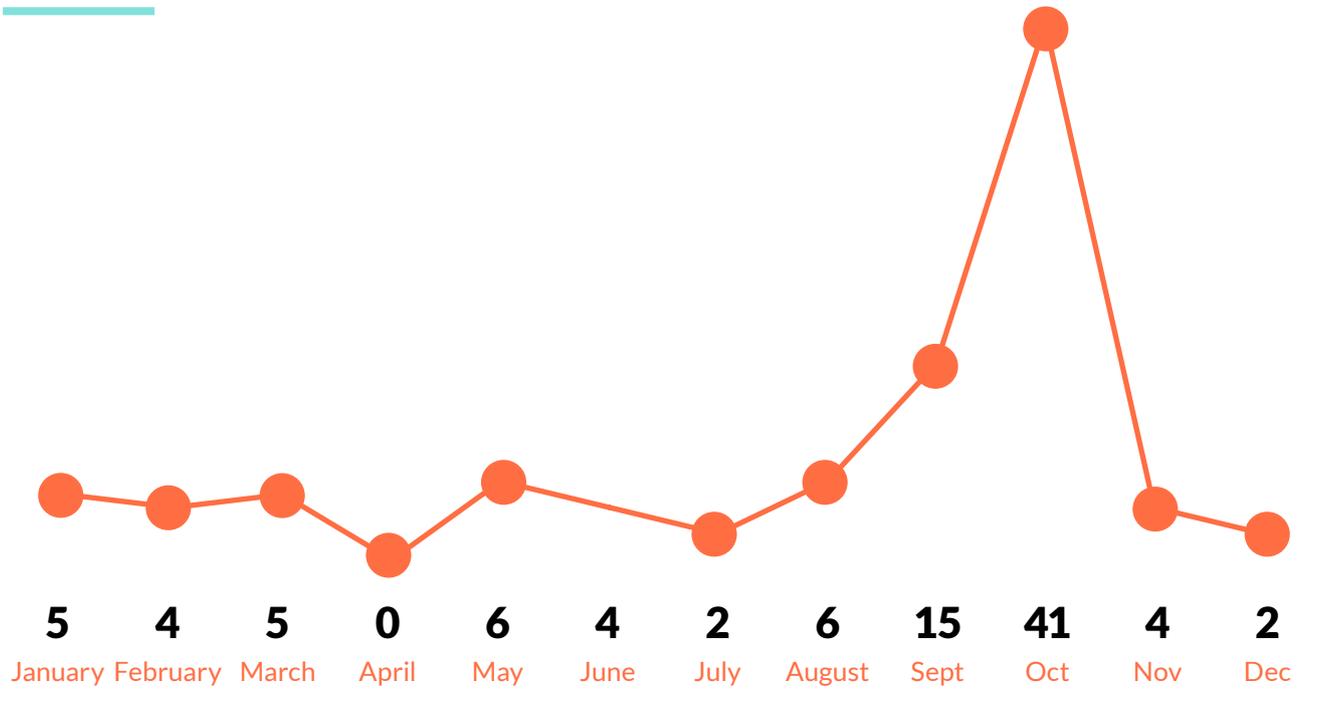
	2025
PHYSICAL AND MORAL INTEGRITY	118
ARRESTED	115
IDENTIFICATION	46
FINES	39
TEMPORARILY DETAINED	25
INFILTRATION	19
JUDICIAL REPRESSION	18
CENSORSHIP	13
NON-IDENTIFIED POLICE OFFICERS	4
BUREAUCRATIC REPRESSION	2
OTHERS	21

As can be seen in the graph above, the **94 cases monitored** in 2025 translate into **420 violations**. The most noteworthy are, on the one hand, the **118 violations of physical and moral integrity**, which mainly comprise countless episodes of disproportionate police violence, and on the other hand, the **115 arrests** that *Defender a quien Defiende* has been able to verify. In both cases, the following stand out: the **mobilisations during October in Barcelona** and its surroundings, as a consequence of the **general strike for Palestine** and the demonstrations in protest against the Israeli interception of the *Global Sumud Flotilla*, as well as the **protests around the celebration of La Vuelta** between August and September 2025.

The data collected also indicates that there have been at least **46 identifications**, aggravated by allegations in several cases of racial profiling, political profiling or even simply for wearing a *kufiya* around the neck. On the other hand, at least **39 economic sanctions** have been recorded, most of them due to the Gag Law, which usually come months after participation in actions or mobilisations, even in some cases without having been identified during the mobilisation. Also noteworthy are **25 cases of detention** and violations of freedom of movement, **18 cases of judicial repression** (complaints, prosecutions, trials and sentences) and **19 cases of infiltration**. It is worth noting that 18 of these 19 cases involve the introduction of plainclothes police into pro-Palestinian

demonstrations, leaving only one case of police infiltration of social movements, which is discussed below. Also significant are the **13 cases of censorship** related to the Palestinian cause, more than a third (34.2 %) of the total number of censorship cases recorded in 2025 in Spain as a whole.

CALENDAR

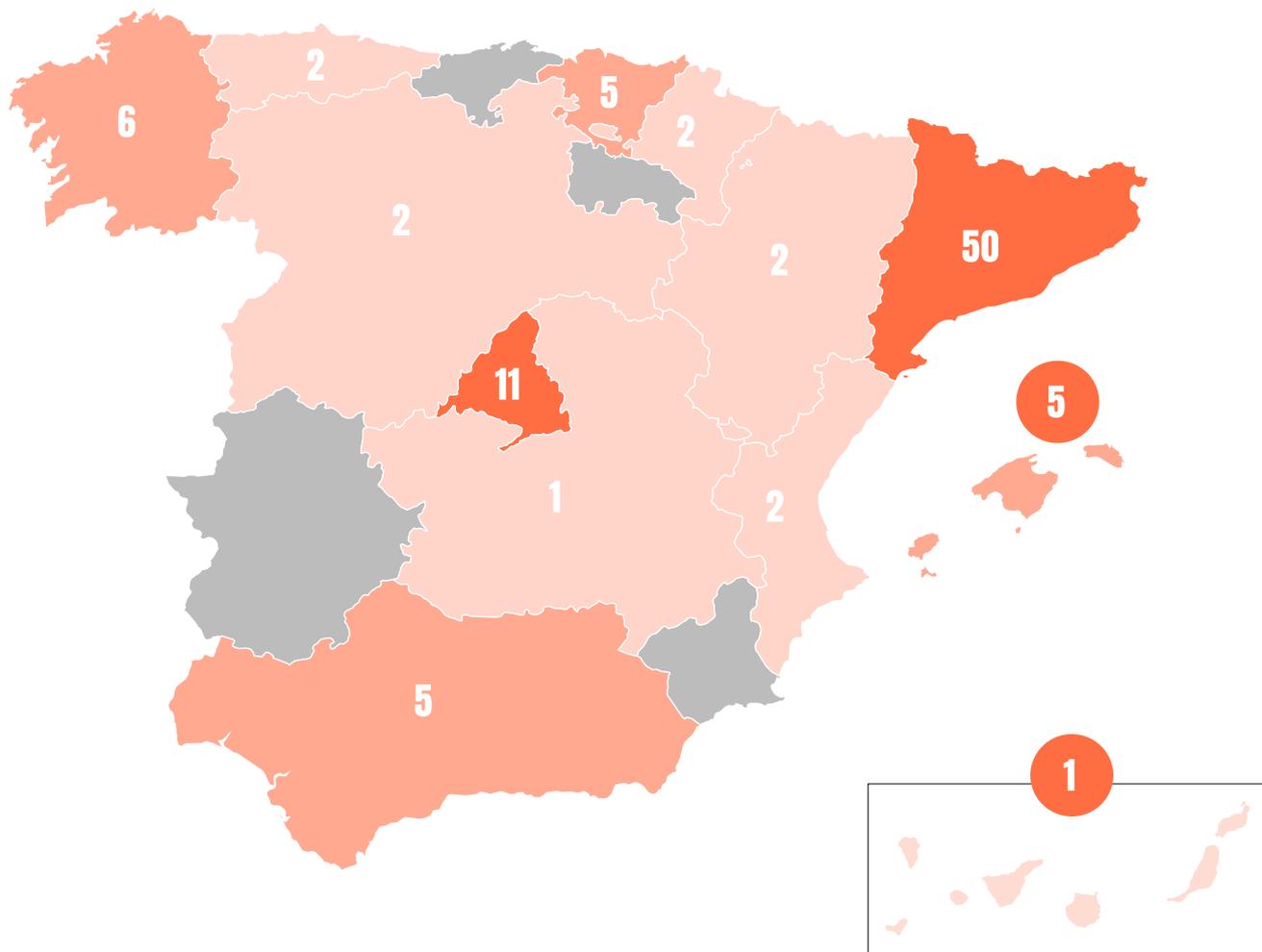


NUMBER OF CASES PER MONTH

As can be seen in the graph above, repression of the movement in Solidarity with Palestine has remained stable throughout the year, with a hectic end of summer and an autumn equinox reaching 41 cases in October. This sudden increase in repression coincides with three milestones mentioned above. The first two are the **celebration of La Vuelta** between August and September, and the wave of protests triggered by the kidnapping of dozens of activists participating in **the Global Sumud Flotilla raid** at the end of the same month. These weeks were also the scene of Trump's 'peace' plan negotiations and later the much-needed ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Something that could have represented a turning point for a decline in mobilisations. On the contrary, rather than maintaining the constancy, the signing of such an agreement meant a very agitated October, with the **general strike for Palestine on 15 October 2025** standing out.

It was precisely on these dates and in Catalonia that most cases of violation of rights in relation to Solidarity with Palestine occurred. In this sense, as can be seen above, more than half of the cases of the pro-Palestinian movement collected by *Defender a quien Defiende* took place in Catalonia, followed by Madrid. The north of the peninsula also stands out with cases related to La Vuelta.

CASES OF VIOLATION BY TERRITORY



● Catalonia	50	● Basque Country	5	● Castile and Leon	2
● Madrid	11	● Navarre	2	● Canary Islands	1
● Galicia	6	● Valencian Community	2	● Castile-La Mancha	1
● Andalusia	5	● Aragon	2		
● Balearic Isl.	5	● Asturias	2		

TOUGHENING OF THE POLICE MODEL

A large part of the number of cases of violations in October 2025 corresponds to a recent unprecedented wave of repression, especially in Catalonia. Several organisations and collectives such as the *Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel (CPCI)*, *Boicot ICL*, the *Confederació Sindical d'Habitatge de Catalunya (COSHAC)*, the *Taula Sindical de Catalunya*, the *Plataforma Antirepressiva de Barcelona* and the network of observers *Som Defensores* (members of *DqD*) pointed out in a [press conference](#) after the strike for Palestine a change of paradigm of the police model.

First, the **lack of generalised police identification** by the autonomous body of the *Mossos d'Esquadra* was denounced. *Som Defensores* pointed out that “the use of waistcoats

without the NOP³ on the back is increasingly common, despite repeated complaints”, a fact that makes accountability in cases of police malpractice difficult. On the other hand, disproportionate police charges without warning were observed, even detecting some unregulated blows with the police baton, or serious and unjustifiable practices, prohibited for the dispersal of demonstrators, such as the carousel⁴ technique.

However, the most worrying police novelty during the October protests was the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of a very dangerous chemical weapon, such as pepper spray. The Barcelona observers’ network criticised the fact that the Mossos opted on several occasions for the use of **pepper spray** as the first option for police response, even against peaceful people or people sitting on the ground, violating the right to assembly, demonstration and information. In this episode, a group of activists sat blocking the path of an Israeli basketball team and suffered the consequences of an **encapsulation with the use of such a chemical**, in which several people were injured and suffered symptoms even weeks after the event. Several of the people affected **filed a collective complaint against the Mossos d’Esquadra**. Although **the complaint was shelved**, an appeal has already been filed, and *DqD* member organisation *Irídia - Centre de Defensa dels Drets Humans* is leading the campaign **STOP Gas Pebre** together with other organisations and trade unions.

The Mossos d’Esquadra seem to be adopting a drift towards a police model like that of the CRS in France⁵, characterised by notably harsh actions, disproportionate use of force, preventive and practically military intervention logic, and systematic use of chemical gases in the control and dispersal of protests. This trend is described in chapter “2.2 Quantitative Analysis”.

PALESTINIAN IDENTITY AS A MECHANISM OF INFILTRATION

On 5 March 2025, Barcelona woke up early in the morning to the devastating news of a **new case of police infiltration** into social movements. Under the identity of **Belén Hammad Gómez**, an agent of the National Police infiltrated the Palestine Solidarity movement, the popular movements of Nou Barris and the *Esquerra Independentista* for more than two years.

From participating in the *Palestinian Community of Catalonia* to dragging containers to build barricades in Urquinaona, Belén deceived colleagues, activists and even friends to pass information to the police. She organised and participated in countless meetings, commissions, protests and congresses in various collectives and organisations in the city. She instrumentalised Palestinian identity to integrate into a community marked by diaspora, stigma and the need to maintain ties and collective memory.

3. The Mossos d’Esquadra must wear the Police Operational Number (NOP) on their backs according to the force’s own internal protocols.

4. The *carousel* technique is a police riot dispersal manoeuvre in which high-speed police vans are used to break up demonstrations. It is a technique that has led to outrages and serious injuries to demonstrators.

5. The Republican Security Companies (CRS, *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*) are the main public order police force in France.

BELÉN'S TRAJECTORY, infiltrated in the Palestine Solidarity and pro-independence movements in Barcelona

Source: Own elaboration based on research by *La Directa* and contacts with the people concerned.

2018	Palestinian Community of Catalonia Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel (Stop Pro-Israeli Complicity Coalition)	OCT	She attends an event organised by both organisations in Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood, says she is Palestinian and wants to participate.
2019	NOVACT Institute for Nonviolence	FEB	She participates in the <i>Rizoma</i> programme, promoted by NOVACT and with public funding from the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation.
	Casal Popular Tres Voltes Rebel (CP3VR)	MAR	<i>Begins to attend events at CP3VR in Nou Barris and continues to participate in the pro-Palestinian movement.</i>
	(still involved in the previous organisations)	MAY	She is fully involved in the organisation of the <i>Defensem els Drets Humans</i> campaign and the Eurovision Boycott, even presenting a solidarity concert in <i>Cotxeres de Sants</i> .
		OCT	Takes part in the wave of protests against the sentencing of the political prisoners of the "procés", even setting up barricades.
2020	Endavant - OSAN	FEB	Involved in the strategic organisation of the <i>Esquerra Independentista</i> , attending the <i>National Training School</i> and a national assembly of <i>Endavant</i> .
	(She continues to be involved in the previous ones).	JUN	Takes part in the <i>Endavant</i> protests " <i>La vida abans que el capital</i> " (<i>Life before capital</i>) during the deconfinement of the pandemic.
		DEC	Says goodbye to her <i>CP3VR</i> entourage because she returns to Madrid, citing "work and family reasons".
2022		JUN	She writes to an <i>Endavant</i> activist on the day the first infiltration is uncovered.
2024		JAN	She leaves the Whatsapp group of the <i>Palestinian Community of Catalonia</i> .
2025		MAR	<i>La Directa</i> uncovers her infiltration.

Belén was the first case of police infiltration uncovered in 2025 (but not the last), and used her identity to make a place for herself in the *Palestinian Community of Catalonia* at an event at *LaFede* in the Raval neighbourhood. From there, she connected with the *Coalició Prou Complicitat amb Israel* (the platform that leads the *BDS* movement in Catalonia), where she made friends and became involved in the *Defensem els Drets Humans* campaign and the actions of the *Boycott Eurovision 2019*. Through the *Rizoma* programme, organised by the *NOVACT Institute of Nonviolence* (member of *DqD*), which aims to connect social movements, Belén jumped to organisations in Nou Barris, participating in the *Casal Popular Tres Voltes Rebel (CP3VR)* and from there to *Endavant - OSAN*, a strategic organisation of the *Esquerra Independentista*.

Like the rest of the infiltrated police officers, Belén suddenly disappeared due to a supposed job change and family illness, which she claimed made her return to Madrid. As if that were not enough, when *La Directa* uncovered the **first case of police infiltration** in 2022, Belén Hammad contacted an *Endavant* activist to ask her how she was doing, after several months of no contact. And it was not until January 2024 that she left the WhatsApp group of the Directive board of the *Comunitat Palestina de Catalunya*.

It was not just another case of infiltration; it was **the instrumentalization of an identity marked by exile and resilience**, to betray from within an essential trust in a movement of struggle that requires precisely these personal ties as a mechanism of resistance.

This connection between Catalan independence and the pro-Palestinian movement is not accidental. In fact, a noteworthy element of the protests in 2025 was that, as Palestine was at the centre of the social mobilisation, several movements established connections with the Palestine Solidarity movement, such as Catalan independence movements (in Catalonia, Valencian Community and Balearic Islands), the movement in defence of housing and squatting (pointing out Israeli companies that do business with housing), the student movement that led the university encampments for Palestine in 2024, the environmental movement and even football fans.

MISAPPLICATION OF THE LAW ON VIOLENCE IN SPORT

Something that was already highlighted in last year's *Defender a quien Defiende* report was the seriousness of the criminal offences applied against people in solidarity with Palestine since October 2023: hate crime, criminal organisation, and glorification of terrorism. Far from reversing this dynamic, in 2025, it has become particularly complex in relation to sanctions, mainly due to the increase in **repression against mobilisations during sporting events**, in response to the *BDS* call to promote **sporting boycott actions**.

Indeed, there have been numerous displays of solidarity by groups of fans at football or basketball matches; many Palestinian flags have been seized by private security at sports stadiums, and several people are set to be sanctioned for this. Although this has been happening since the end of 2023, the novelty this year has come with the **use of Law 19/2007**, of 11 July, **against violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sport**. This law establishes a specific legal framework to prevent, control and strictly punish violent, racist, xenophobic or intolerant behaviour in the context of sporting competitions and events in Spain.

Once again, we see legislation that was once passed to protect minorities and vulnerable groups being misused to **limit freedom of expression and the rights of assembly, association and demonstration**. History repeats itself. What happened before with hate crime is now happening with legitimate expressions, such as Palestinian symbols or chants against genocide, which are severely punished by legislation initially designed to punish fights between hooligan groups or to sanction displays of racism and xenophobia that are unfortunately common in the sporting arena.

The Law against violence in sport prohibits, in its [article 2](#), the display of flags, symbols or other signs **that incite violence or terrorism**, or that include messages of a racist, xenophobic or intolerant nature. To interpret the flying of a Palestinian flag or the wearing of a T-shirt in Palestinian colours as incitement to violence or terrorism, or to interpret support for the Palestinian as racist, is not only inappropriate, but also **colonial in outlook and a malicious and discriminatory reading**.

Thus, an important bulk of fines and sanctions received by pro-Palestinian activists have surprisingly not been issued under the protection of the Gag Law, but have been brought by the **Anti-Violence Commission**, i.e. [the State Commission against Violence, Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance in Sport](#), the body in charge of regulating and implementing Law 19/2007. This differential fact, on the one hand, reinforces the criminalising narrative that solidarity with Palestine implies incitement to violence and that anti-Zionism is equated with anti-Semitism. On the other hand, the sanctions processed via the Anti-Violence Commission **tend to be higher**. Thus, the scenario of the summer of 2025, with boycott actions at every point through which La Vuelta cycled, has resulted in a [high number of economic sanctions imposed in this way](#), apart from the prohibition to attend any sporting event for a period of six months.

CHRONOLOGY OF A SUCCESS STORY: THE LA VUELTA MOBILISATIONS

Faced with a disparate and somewhat dystopian world in which double standards (and actions) are the norm, sporting events are and have always been great stages for political promotion. Olympic Games, World Cups and even the *Super Bowl* itself are international showcases. Many countries have used such a showcase to sell their image to a certain extent, and there are also several cases in which entire countries have been banned from attending them. From Germany at the London Olympics in '48, to South Africa on seven occasions.

Yet, while Russia and Belarus are banned from major sporting events for their role in the invasion of Ukraine, the permissiveness and tolerance of Palestinian genocide is infamous. In the face of this, as was done in the case of apartheid in South Africa, the *BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement* promotes the policy of international isolation in all areas, including sports, through the strategy of boycott. Despite repeated attempts at criminalisation, **the boycott is a legitimate tool**, a civil strategy of nonviolent struggle to defend rights, and [this has been expressed](#) by human rights organisations such as *Amnesty International*.

CHRONOLOGY OF MOBILISATIONS IN THE "VUELTA CICLISTA".

06/09 STAGE 14 AVILÉS (ASTURIAS)

Israel Premier Tech removes the name of the country from the team's jersey

Mass protests are repeated

Activists manage to hack into La Vuelta radio station

No incidents reported

04/09 STAGE 12 LAREDO (CANTABRIA)

Hundreds of activists flood Cantabria with Palestinian symbolism

The organisation once again removes banners and flags, restricting freedom of expression

05/09 STAGE 13 ANGLIRU (ASTURIAS)

A group of activists manage to cut off La Vuelta

The Guardia Civil detain 12 people accused of public disorder for stopping the march

02/09 STAGE 10 LUMBIER (NAVARRRE)

A group of activists try to cut off the peloton

Large deployment of Guardia Civil, P. Foral, P. Nacional and French Gendarmerie
2 identifications

03/09 STAGE 10 BILBAO

A massive protest manages to suspend the end of the stage

The technical director of La Vuelta invites Israel to reflect on its continuity

Ertzaintza detains 3 activists

29/08 STAGE 7 CERLER

Palestinian flags, anti-Carrefour banners and graffiti on the route

They denounce disproportionate police actions and censorship by the organisation of La Vuelta, which rips up and confiscates flags and other material that do not obstruct passage

30/08 STAGE 8 ZARAGOZA/HUESCA

At many points along the route, hundreds of activists welcome the cyclists with Palestinian flags

No incidents reported

31/08 STAGE 9 LA RIOJA

Hundreds of activists welcome the cyclists with Palestinian flags at several points along the route

No incidents reported

27/08 STAGE 5 FIGUERES

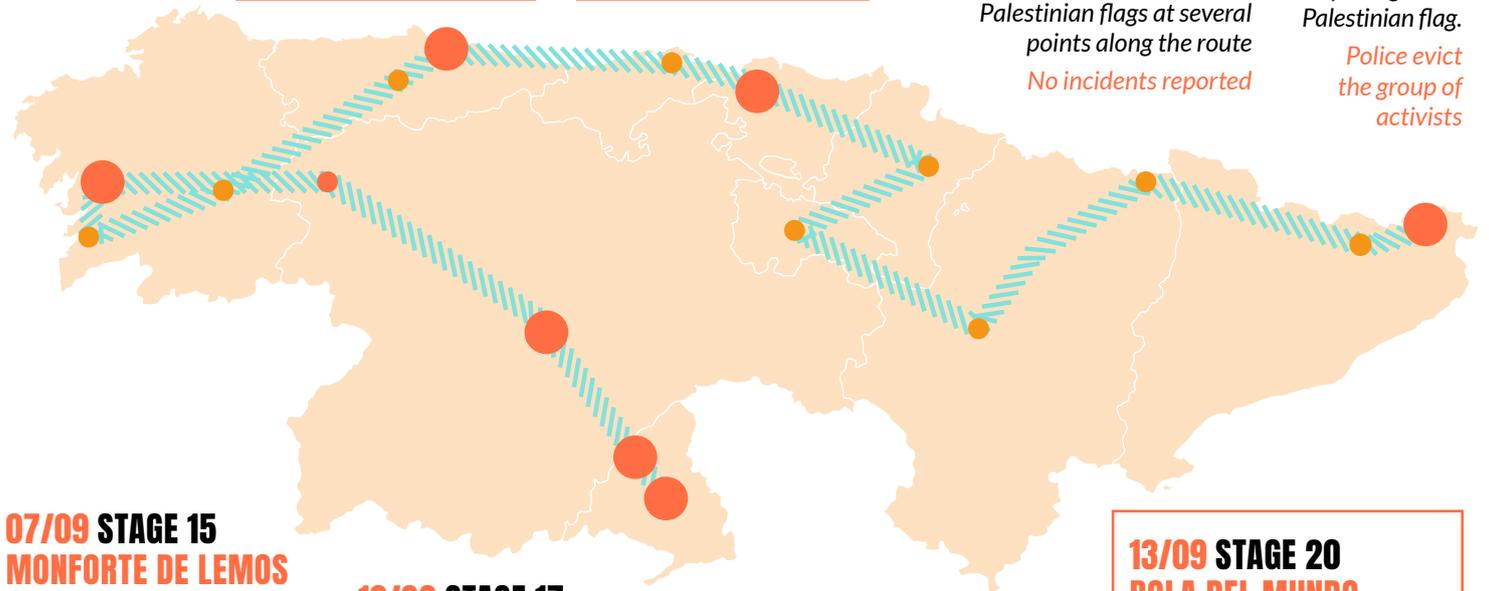
5 activists break in and cut off La Vuelta

1 arrested and 4 people identified

28/08 STAGE 6 OLOT

A group of activists try to block the passage with Palestinian flag.

Police evict the group of activists



07/09 STAGE 15 MONFORTE DE LEMOS (LUGO)

They flood Galicia with Palestinian flags. They manage to cut off the passage of La Vuelta momentarily

Several identifications in Monforte de Lemos for carrying Palestinian flags

10 people arrested between O Corgo and Monforte de Lemos, accused of public disorder

10/09 STAGE 17 PONFERRADA

A mural in El Bierzo and hundreds of demonstrators accompany La Vuelta with Palestinian symbolism

Several identifications by the National Police

The National Court opens proceedings for a "hate crime" against the team from Israel

09/09 STAGE 16 MORGADÁNS (PONTEVEDRA)

They try to block the way with a tree on the road

POIO (PONTEVEDRA)

They block the passage of La Vuelta, which is forced to advance the finish line by 8 km

They report charges by the Guardia Civil and the National Police

11/09 STAGE 18 VALLADOLID

Massive protest against the Israeli team that interrupts the route on two occasions. They limit access to people with Palestinian symbols, such as flags or kufiyas

Two people were arrested, and 17 others were identified and detained

12/09 STAGE 19 GUIJUELO (SALAMANCA)

Pro-Palestinian protests at the start and on the course of La Vuelta

No incidents reported

13/09 STAGE 20 BOLA DEL MUNDO (MADRID)

The passage of cyclists in the Sierra de Madrid is partially cut off.

200 protesters force a change in the route of La Vuelta

No incidents reported

14/09 STAGE 18 MADRID

After a historic day of protests, the final stage of La Vuelta in Madrid is suspended. Violent charges by the National Police, around twenty injured, 5 seriously

Rubber bullets were fired, and pepper spray was used (PN)

Two people arrested

Following this logic, five people decided to stand in the way of **La Vuelta**, one of the main sporting events in Spain, to protest against the participation of the **Israel Premier Tech team**, owned by millionaire Sylvan Adams, a close friend of Netanyahu. On that first stage of La Vuelta on the peninsula, little did those **five people in Figueres** expect that, after their identification (and the arrest of one of them), they had lit the fuse of a protest movement that maintained an **exemplary campaign of nonviolent solidarity** for three weeks.

As the peloton advanced through the north of the country, a crescendo of protests multiplied the solidarity, and demonstrations and rallies followed one after the other. In every town and city, Palestine took centre stage thanks to thousands and thousands of people who peacefully tried to sabotage the passage of the race, even putting their own bodies on the line.

The first great victory was in Bilbao. In the Basque capital, the mobilisations succeeded for the first time in getting **the end of the stage suspended**. People became aware that the La Vuelta could be stopped. A burst of energy that encouraged thousands of people to dye the roads with the colours of Palestine. The popular response was so great that the authorities reacted with a joint police deployment of the National Police, the Guardia Civil and the local and regional police where the route passed through, on some occasions even collaborating with the French Gendarmerie at border points. As a result, the episodes of repression became increasingly frequent, including by the organising company of La Vuelta itself, which was criticised on several occasions for **removing Palestinian symbols** along the route that did not obstruct anyone's path, thus restricting freedom of expression.

At the halfway point of the competition, the victories of the Palestine Solidarity movement began to grow. The Israeli team decided, with the owner's reluctance, to remove **the name of the country from the jersey of its athletes**. The organisation was increasingly losing control. It became commonplace to reroute, to shorten stages, or to advance the finish line by several kilometres due to the impossibility of running the race normally—all the while facing mobilisations that were growing day by day.

On at least six occasions they managed to cut the route, several stages had to be shortened and the Vuelta ended in a chaotic and epic happy ending, despite the police violence, despite the pepper spray, the rubber bullets and despite the criminalisation of the Ayuso government, which **tried to link the demonstrators with the *kale borroka* and with ETA**, as in the times of Aznar. The Vuelta could not hold its final stage. It was all suspended: the stage, the podium and the party. **A popular victory of the social movements** that did their job and managed to stop a competition that was being complicit in the Zionist propaganda apparatus. the stage, the podium and the party. A popular victory of the social movements that did their job and managed to stop a competition that was being complicit in the Zionist propaganda apparatus.

The consequences of such a feat were not few. The mobilisations resulted in at least **38 people being fined by the Anti-Violence Commission, twenty people arrested** along the route, **thirty identifications, widespread censure** by the competition organisers, and **dozens of people injured**, mainly in Madrid, where the National Police charged with force and disproportion, even using **rubber balls**.

Violence that will never be able to cover up the international success of the strength of the people.

[CHAPTER 3]

OLD AND NEW TOOLS OF REPRESSION

3.1 TEN YEARS OF THE GAG LAW

Sara López, *Sol Legal Commission*

Ten years have passed since the Organic Law 4/2015, of 30 March, on the Protection of Citizen Security was passed. Since its entry into force in July 2015, the better known as the Gag Law, has generated an intensive and sustained use of administrative sanctioning law as an ordinary instrument of control of public space, displacing conflicts traditionally subject to judicial control towards administrative procedures characterised by their immediate enforceability and a reduced margin of effective contradiction. Thus, an administrative sanctioning system of massive application has been set up (almost two and a half million infringements initiated in ten years), with a high concentration of cases in a reduced number of types of infringements and a direct impact on the exercise of public freedoms. The official data collected in the Ministry of the Interior's Statistical Yearbooks show a stable pattern of use of administrative punitive power that transcends specific circumstances and is sustained over time.

DATA AND THE EXERCISE OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

A disaggregated analysis by article confirms the centrality of article 36.6 (disobedience or resistance to authority) and article 37.4 (disrespect or disregard for officers), together with article 36.16. From the *Yearbook series* and independent compilations based on this data, it can be stated that between 2016 and 2019, penalties for art. 36.6 were recurrently in the range of 40,000 to 90,000 per year, with an exceptional peak in 2020 and a subsequent stabilisation (2021-2023) in ranges of several tens of thousands. In the case of Art. 37.4, penalties show a constant presence, usually in the range of 5,000 to 15,000 per year. Taken together, the two precepts account for approximately 25% to 35% of the annual total of penalties in ordinary years.

These annual ranges —and not one-off figures— are the result of necessary methodological precautions: the Yearbook counts the number of cases initiated, presents disaggregation by the bodies involved and reflects territorial differences deriving from regional competences. Nonetheless, the year-on-year consistency of the ranges allows us to iden-

tify a structural pattern: disobedience (article 36.6) and disrespect (article 37.4) operate as types of broad elasticity, especially in interactions on public roads and in contexts of protest or preventive control of public space. The most obvious example is to be found in 2020: in that year, **375,930 sanctions were initiated in the whole of Spain**, predominantly for the application of Article 36.6, which concentrated approximately 243,000 cases, i.e. around 65% of the total sanctions for the year, for alleged breaches of mobility restrictions and police orders issued during the health emergency. This can only be interpreted as the extreme manifestation of a regulatory design that allows for an expansive application of broadly formulated sanctioning types, supported by the presumption of veracity of the acting agents.

This pattern has been documented and criticised by civil society organisations. The platform *No Somos Delito*, together with *Amnesty International*, *Rights International Spain* and *Greenpeace*, have warned that the broad wording of articles 36.6 and 37.4 broaden police discretion and shift the resolution of conflicts towards a rapid and executive administrative procedure, with a potentially dissuasive impact on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and social protest, especially for young people, migrants and activists.

From a constitutional perspective, although most of the articles of the law were declared in accordance with the Constitution in *STC 172/2020*, the Constitutional Court itself stressed that its application must strictly respect the principles of proportionality and necessity, as well as the reinforced guarantees of the rights recognised in Articles 20 and 21 of the Spanish Constitution. This standard is particularly demanding when the sanctioning power affects conduct linked to the exercise of protest, public expression or presence in the public space. In the same sense, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly warned that even administrative sanctions of a pecuniary nature can produce a chilling effect incompatible with Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights when they are applied extensively or disproportionately (*Ezelin v. France*, 1991, para. 39; *Oya Ataman v. Turkey*, 2006, paras 38-42; *Kudrevičius and Others v. Lithuania [GS]*, 2015, para. 100).

International standards reinforce this reading. The UN Human Rights Committee has established that restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression should not be used to discourage participation in public affairs, including in emergency contexts (*General Comments No. 34, freedom of expression*, and *No. 37, right of assembly*).

Overall, the longitudinal analysis, the quantitative magnitude of the sanctioning system and its material concentration on conduct linked to the exercise of public freedoms, highlights the need to assess the practical application of Organic Law 4/2015 under the standards of strict necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination required by international human rights law.

THE POLITICAL LABYRINTH OF A PENDING REFORM

Despite promises of repeal or amendment, especially after the formation of the first coalition government in 2020, the law remains in full force and effect. On the tenth anniversary of its entry into force, the picture is one of stalled reform. There have been as many as eight attempts at change, but none have been successful.

Currently, a bill promoted by *PSOE*, *Sumar*, *EH Bildu* and *PNV* to modify the law (even renaming it “For the Protection of Liberties and Citizen Security”) is in the parliamentary process —presumably, as there is no actual evidence. The new text proposes advances such as the progressive replacement of rubber bullets and the elimination of the ban on demonstrating in front of Congress. However, the offences most used to repress protest are not eliminated, and only insufficient commitments are made concerning hot returns, and the ban on racial profiling is not addressed either. Several of the demands for an explicit and immediate ban made by civil society and human rights organisations are thus ignored.

In conclusion, the tenth anniversary of the Gag Law is not a commemoration but a reflection of a profound and unresolved controversy. The law has meant, in practice, a step backwards in the standards of protection of human rights in Spain, according to numerous international organisations and bodies. Ten years later, with millions of sanctions behind it and sustained calls from civil society for change, its modification remains an unresolved issue for a healthy and consolidated democracy.

3.2 POLICE WEAPONS AND USE OF FORCE

Cèlia Carbonell, *Irídia - Centre per la defensa dels drets humans*

In 2025, several trends have been documented regarding the use of force and riot control equipment by the police forces, which show a **paradigm shift in the way protests are repressed**. Among the most worrying are cases of malpractice in the use of the police baton: not only are top-down blows and impact on vital areas of the body still being recorded, but the number of bone fractures has doubled. This police violence has been largely documented at pro-Palestinian protests in different parts of the state, which are developed in a detailed chapter of this report.

In some protests in **Madrid** and **Barcelona**, a large number of **broken bones in arms, legs and ribs** have been documented due to the use of the police baton by the National Police and the Mossos d'Esquadra. In the October demonstrations for Palestine in Barcelona, two people were hit in the testicles with the police baton, requiring surgery and even the removal of the organ.

These protests are significant because, at a time of large and sustained mobilisation on the streets, it is in these protests that **malpractice** has been identified in the **use of different types of riot control equipment, such as rubber bullets, foam projectiles or pepper spray**, depending on the police force and the territory. On at least three occasions in 2025, the National Police have used rubber bullets to repress protests, including the metalworkers' strike in Cádiz and the boycott actions against La Vuelta Ciclista in Madrid. In the latter, the *Madrid Network of Observers of the Right to Protest* was able to document, on the streets, the abusive and disproportionate use of force. Among the actions observed, the unjustified use of rubber bullets on a peaceful gathering stood out. It resulted in more than a dozen people being injured.



Photograph taken by David Gago during the mobilizations in Madrid to boycott the La Vuelta.

Published in El Salto Diario on September 15, 2025.

Even though the use of this material can be considered exceptional, we would like to highlight its qualitative dimension. It has been proven that it can cause particularly serious injuries, including mutilation and even death. It should also be noted that, of the 40 identified cases of people injured by rubber bullets between 2000 and 2020, in none of them has the perpetrator been convicted. Only in the case of the murder of Iñigo Cabacas was an Ertzaintza commander convicted for the crime of manslaughter committed through gross negligence, as he had failed to stop the police charge. For this reason, *Defender a quien Defiende* stands firm in its **demand for an immediate ban on this type of equipment**, as has already been achieved in other police forces. However, at present, the protocols for the use of rubber bullets by National Police and Guardia Civil officers are neither public nor accessible.

Likewise, during the pro-Palestinian protests held in October in Barcelona, which culminated in the strike for Palestine on 15 October (which will be referred to repeatedly, given that it concentrates many alleged police malpractices), an officer of the Mossos d'Esquadra fired a foam projectile at a **journalist who was working on the coverage of the event**. The police action was fully recorded, and several eyewitnesses have confirmed that, at the time of the shot, no disturbances or violence were taking place. The video shows how the journalist –visibly identified as such by a waistcoat and helmet– was walking with his back to the police cordon when he was shot at close range in the upper arm, near the neck, above the waist and almost at head level, causing him to fall to the ground. The journalist himself stated that the officer had previously threatened him.

The **protocol for the use of this type of weapon** establishes that it must be aimed “from the abdomen downwards” and expressly stipulates that under no circumstances may it be fired at the head or neck. It also requires the concurrence of a situation of serious safety risk, a circumstance that was not present at the time, according to what has been documented. For all these reasons, it would be an **unjustified action and contrary to the protocols for the use of this type of projectile**. The case is currently in the investigation phase, following the filing of a complaint by the journalist.

It should be noted that, thanks to popular pressure, the Parliament of Catalonia **agreed to withdraw the SIR-X projectiles** (the most harmful type of foam projectiles), a measure which, according to the Department of the Interior, became effective in 2024. However, this projectile has yet to be removed from the Protocol of Use, which was amended in October 2023.

Actions such as the one described above show that serious breaches of the protocol for the use of SIR shells persist, which can cause significant harm to the physical and moral integrity of people and, in this case, also to the fundamental right to information. For all these reasons, we continue to call for a **total ban on foam projectiles** in Catalonia.

Finally, 2025 was marked by the reappearance of the use of pepper spray (*Oleoresin Capsicum* gas), the use of which had not been recorded so frequently in the context of protests for years. Although its use was documented in Madrid during the protests against La Vuelta, the recurrence and the way in which it has been used by the Mossos d'Esquadra in a short period of time are particularly worrying. In 2025, **in Catalonia, OC gas was used in**

four different calls: one in Girona in April and the other three in October 2025, all within the framework of the pro-Palestinian demonstrations in October, in which it was used on six different occasions. The most paradigmatic case was on 15 October, when it was used against approximately a hundred demonstrators who were sitting on the ground on the ramp of the car park of the Sants Station. The demonstrators were not behaving violently; they were not moving or attempting to break the police cordon. They were peacefully blocking a bus, which was hundreds of metres away, that was to take an Israeli basketball team to Manresa.

In this context, the officers **discharged pepper spray directly at eye level and at very close range**, on four occasions, without warning or prior order to disperse. They did so when a second police cordon, encapsulating the protesters a few metres away, had begun to charge the group of protesters on the ground. Also, thanks to the **graphic documentation from *Som Defensores*** (fundamental for the complaint filed), it has been possible to know that the order was neither authorised by the CECOR⁶ nor by the head of the device on the ground.

The action had the effect of **hindering the exercise of the right to protest and journalistic work**, as several journalists covering the action had to interrupt their work due to gas inhalation. In addition, a total of forty people required medical attention for symptoms of stinging and pain in the palms of their hands and soles of their feet, eye irritation, breathing difficulties, visual fatigue, hypersensitivity and migraines, lasting, in some cases, between three and thirty days. It is important to mention that, due to the use of such a weapon on this occasion, several police officers had to be evacuated due to gas inhalation. As noted above, other similar actions by the Mossos d'Esquadra have been documented involving the use of pepper spray directly in the faces of demonstrators.



Photograph taken by Joanna Chichelnitzky during the sports boycott action at Sants Station, part of the strike for Palestine.

Published in La Directa on December 16, 2025.

6. CECOR is the Barcelona Emergency Operations Coordination Centre. More information: https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/pla-accio-govern2023-2027/es/actuacio/nuevo-centro-de-coordinacion-operativa-de-emergencias-de-barcelona-cecor_255

Due to the recurrence and inappropriate use of this material (which, in the case of the Mossos d'Esquadra, comes in extinguishers 26 cm long and weighing up to half a kilogram), various organisations have taken action to denounce its use through **legal action**, as well as through a **campaign to demand its prohibition**. At present, **the protocol for the use of pepper spray is not public and is under revision**, an **argument that has been used to justify the refusal to publish it**, despite the fact that it has been requested on several occasions **by human rights organisations**. However, the **actions described are contrary to international standards**, which prohibit its use in situations of passive resistance or with the aim of forcing compliance with orders or dispersing concentrations. According to these standards, pepper spray should only be used as a defensive tool against violent individuals and, even then, never at less than one metre to avoid injury to the face or eyes. In line with the above, it is reiterated, for yet another year, that most of the **protocols regulating the use of force**, as well as police tools and weapons, **are still not public**, which makes it difficult for civil society to observe and monitor police actions and possible abuses and malpractice.

In addition to these facts, various elements which **reinforce the perception of impunity** continue to be documented occasionally, such as, for example, verbal threats by police officers to demonstrators to stop recording police interventions. **Such actions promote the misconception that police actions in public spaces cannot be recorded**. Such demands not only hinder the work of documentation and accountability but also contribute to discouraging the exercise of the right to information and popular control of police action.

This type of behaviour leads to a lack of documentation (photographs and videos recording potentially reportable police actions) and generates **a climate of defencelessness that feeds the abuse of power** by the police forces, who rely on their presumption of veracity (established in administrative proceedings, but which also extends to the criminal sphere). This is one of the major triggers for impunity and discrimination in cases of racist violence, which are still often documented on the streets as a prominent element of police conduct.

In the framework of the 10th anniversary of the **Gag Rule**, *Amnesty International* launched a campaign —actively supported by *Defender a quien Defiende* and all its member organisations across the peninsula— under the slogan **“Stop Racism, Not People”**. The campaign aimed to make racism visible as a systemic problem in Spain, subject to repeated denial and lack of recognition by the Administration and institutions, which ends up becoming the first obstacle to tackling it comprehensively. For this reason, the campaign proposed the implementation of **concrete, necessary and urgent measures to eradicate police racism**.

3.3 TECHNOLOGIES OF CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE

Cèlia Carbonell, *Irdia - Centre per la defensa dels drets humans*

According to the reports of 2022 and 2023 by *Defender a quien Defiende*, the technological dimension has been unavoidably incorporated following the publication of the scandal known as Catalan Gate, in April 2022. *The report published by The Citizen Lab*, and later confirmed by *Amnesty International*, uncovered **the spying on 65 people linked to the Catalan self-determination movement using Pegasus spyware**. Most of those affected were lawyers, human rights defenders, activists and political representatives of the Catalan Parliament and the European Parliament.

Although *the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) was found to be at fault*, neither it nor the Spanish government have made a public statement on the matter in the three years since the events came to light. The people affected are immersed in a protracted legal dispute, marked by constant extensions, while dozens of cases continue to await clarification of what happened to their phones, despite the obvious procedural difficulties. **After three years, the information available is still limited** (only promoted by the organisations denouncing these cases), protected by Franco's Official Secrets Law, which *continues to hinder the declassification of information* and, consequently, **the purging of responsibilities and accountability processes**.

Therefore, the strategy in these cases, when dealing with the problem of cyber-surveillance services —call it Pegasus, Predator or Paragon— is to focus **both on the company responsible for developing this abusive and uncontrollable technology and on its clients**, the states. Hence, the ongoing proceedings are not only directed against the CNI, but also *against NSO Group*, the Israeli company responsible for creating, developing, and exporting Pegasus —as well as testing on the Palestinian people.

However, in the 2025 report, it is even more difficult to ignore **the progressive introduction of all kinds of control and surveillance technologies in the public space**. This is an urgent reality that needs to be addressed in Spain, especially at a time of accelerating expansion of algorithmic surveillance and increasing deployment of police and border technologies. These tools combine biometric recognition, behavioural analysis, predictive systems and mass monitoring, and are mostly deployed in public squares, stations, underprivileged neighbourhoods and critical infrastructures. In particular, this deployment is geographically concentrated in those spaces where the exercise of power is most visible: streets, borders and police forces.

In the current context, it is essential to confront and analyse this trend, which puts the space of civil society at risk by restricting it and subjecting it to control. Otherwise, as evidenced by the Pegasus case —in which events that happened between 2015 and 2020 are still in litigation— efforts continue to focus on clarifying and investigating the past, making it impossible to understand and address the present and prepare for the future.

The lack of information and transparency remains a central part of the problem, as it prevents us from knowing precisely the scope and type of technologies owned and used by the Spanish state in public spaces and in actions that affect civil society, leaving us in a situation of defencelessness.

Hence, the importance of reports such as the one *published by AlgoRace, LaFede and the IA Ciudadana coalition*, which not only invite reflection on the **automation of control and surveillance**, but also contribute to generating **critical frameworks from which to question the rhetoric of securitisation that is being imposed in Europe**, including Spain. This narrative presents the adoption of such technologies as an inevitable step in the name of innovation and economic “competitiveness”, thus legitimising their expansion without control and little regulation.

As the report points out, although it may sometimes seem like science fiction, biometric surveillance in the public space is already a reality. Unlike their use in the personal sphere (where they can be presented as a tool that facilitates access to our devices), in public spaces, these technologies are embedded in **a historical tradition of control mechanisms**. In this context, biometric surveillance is defined as the mass capture and processing of images and data of people in spaces such as airports, squares or streets, for various purposes, including the maintenance of public order, the prosecution of crime or border control.

This type of technology is therefore built on a controversial premise: **the selective control of the population** by differentiating between who is considered “trustworthy” and who becomes “suspect”. It is worth noting that these tools are developed in a context of structural racism and therefore perpetuate historical patterns of power by replacing the individual with algorithmic profiles constructed from biased data.

Despite not having regulations governing the use of facial recognition technologies in public spaces, the Spain is also partaking in this significant technological expansion, especially in the private sector (supermarkets and airports), in the police sphere (searches of detained persons), in the health and border spheres –with the misnamed “smart border” in Ceuta and Melilla, integrated into the new Entry-Exit System of the European Union– as well as in the public space in general.

In a context in which this technology does not cease (nor is it likely to cease) to expand and gain presence in the public space, the lack of clear and guaranteeing regulation places the population in a situation of defencelessness in the face of arbitrary and opaque decisions by the government and the security forces. All of this, as is common in other cases, is often protected by the concept of “National Security”, which has become a recurrent catch-all to justify this type of action and the violation of many fundamental rights.

Barcelona has become a clear example of this. Since *2020*, there has been a steady increase, *year after year*, in the number of video surveillance cameras with facial recognition systems distributed throughout the city. *In 2025, the installation of 500 new cameras is planned*, in addition to the 10,000 cameras already installed in the metro network and the 2,500 security cameras operated by Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB), some of them with features like drones equipped with thermal cameras.

The report “**The Invisible Police: Surveillance Technologies in Catalonia**” warns that the police (basically the Mossos d’Esquadra and the Guàrdia Urbana) have been trained in a whole range of technologies, including drones with thermal vision, facial recognition algorithms and sophisticated predictive systems, which have transformed public space. Thus, despite the increase in police presence, which has intensified by the end of 2025, police forces are also acquiring a technological and invisible dimension in terms of social control and their forms of action.

As the *AlgoRace* and *LaFede* report warns, we are facing **an accelerated change in the introduction of these technologies in the short, medium and long term**. In the short term alone (1 to 3 years), significant growth in biometric technology deployments at borders, airports, stations and public spaces is expected. In the medium term (3 to 7 years), the use of biometric systems could become structural and routine. And in the long term (7 to 15 years), if this permissive drift continues, Europe could move towards a biometric police state model, in which permanent, predictive and stratified surveillance becomes the norm rather than the exception.

It is therefore essential to start incorporating this technological perspective in reports such as this one, as **“only an informed society, which understands the real risks and re-conceives itself as a political subject in the public space, can resist the normalisation of surveillance and mobilise to build democratic and just alternatives”**.

[CHAPTER 4]

PROTESTING IN TIMES OF REACTION

Bernat Aragó, *NOVACT Institute of Nonviolence*

A social centre dawns full of threats reminiscent of an all-too-familiar past. A young man waits and despairs in a dock sentence for the seventh consecutive year, pending a trial date for demonstrating against a police union. A final needle stroke stitches up a wound to keep it from bleeding, while a buffoon of hate, a telemarketing heckler, smiles mockingly behind a police cordon that has militarised the university. A device explodes at a popular party, turning a celebratory event into a black and white photograph: a sordid portrait of a society trapped on a broken time machine which only knows how to rewind. It is heading, at full throttle, towards a dismal memory.

These are some of the **more than 60 cases registered this year linked to fascism**. Fascism. It is not that difficult to pronounce. While we play at “spot the difference” between terms and get lost in the technicalities, they’re eating our toast. And even more than that: they rule several municipalities, communities and even entire countries. They dominate the narrative, the screens and the algorithm. Even Babylon itself is ruled by a billionaire without a moustache, but with a personality more volatile than cryptocurrencies. And his friends, despite not having moustaches either, stir the masses with a certain orthopaedic gesticulation that, rather than moving Overton’s window, smashes it against the wall —the back one, on the right.

In this context, 2025 has been marked by an upsurge in violations of the right to protest in relation to the anti-fascist movement, and by **dozens of cowardly attacks** which, with night-time and malice aforethought, brought the mummies of the past to parade on the robust canvas of the social movements. It has also been the year in which several media troubadours, be they Quiles⁷ or Olona⁸, have toured the country more than Rosalía, shaking Coca Cola and Mentos wherever they performed. The pre-campaign year in which the monsters of the *chiaroscuro* have come out of the shadows to win future votes based on fear and lynchings. They may be called *Vox* or *Aliança*, and sometimes even more *Popular* names⁹. They have come to tell us tales: false and reductionist dystopias in which the criminal is a criminal because he is a migrant and not because he is poor, in which climate

7. Far right journalist and media agitator.

8. Member of the far right party Vox and media agitator.

9. Vox and Aliança: far-right parties. Popular Party: right party in Spain.

change is a farce of a Masonic agenda and in which freedom means leaving the elderly to die in a nursing home.¹⁰ They are simply the “friendly” and “light” side of the same coin, those that prowl the neighbourhood, wielding a baseball bat, with shaved heads, braces and boots. *Núcleo Nacional*¹¹ —who do wear a moustache— have starred in several scenes in which, protected and cordoned off by the police, they have been able to spread their hatred in freedom while the blows fell on the other side.

The normalisation of this type of actions and rethoric did not happen overnight, nor was it because anyone roused anyone else. It has come about because of constant **media hammering**, of an attrition designed and cooked up to increase audiences, which has eroded hope in a context of crisis. When a certain Quintana¹² repeats ad nauseam that your house will be squatted the moment you go out to the bakery, when transgender people, Muslims and immigrants are called names, when every morning on the radio you listen to a supposed entrepreneur who writes self-help books, or the property vigilante who carries out removals with much coercion and little judicial order, or the con artists who have sequestered tv prime time... In the end, everyone gets sucked into the snowball, and we all roll along without knowing it. It is not just a matter of communication or information; it is complicity and co-responsibility in feeding its legitimacy.

In addition to conventional media, **content platforms**, which pretended to be social but were not even networks, **have also contributed to this sad landscape**. The world of likes and the public agora, which gave us so much potential in the squares one now distant May, has become a cave. A cave where the inhuman goes viral and where artificial intelligence slop rots your brain and leaves you hooked to the screen, addicted to the infinite scroll. It is not that we don't know what's true and what's not. It is that it doesn't matter anymore. But look at that kitten, it dances so well! It's no coincidence that what we once perceived as bubbles around us has coalesced into a single bubble completely unrelated to our context. Inside, there is little more than rubbish, bots, violence and Temu ads. Not surprising, coming from **a techno-feudal system**. Although one day, in our naivety, we believed it to be free.

The bombardment of information becomes an executioner of language. **Words take on new meanings because they have distorted even democracy itself**. A parliamentary majority is now a coup d'état. The result of the ballot box is called a dictatorship. And freedom, oh freedom! It seems that nowadays it means drinking beer, investing in bitcoins, or believing oneself to have the right to do whatever one pleases, regardless of others. There will be a day when everyone will look up and see a sign that says¹³, “You can make jokes about homosexuals and dwarves”¹⁴. The scoundrels of political incorrectness are as mod-

10. It refers to the management of the nursing homes during the Covid pandemic by the government of Madrid in the hands of the Spanish Popular Party.

11. Spanish neonazi political party

12. Ana Rosa Quintana - Moderator of one of the most popular morning magazines in Spain, that spreads right winged narratives.

13. Reference to a freedom Spanish song wrote by José Antonio Labordeta.

14. A quote from a former Spanish politician interviewed on a well-known prime-time television programme, in which he claimed that there was no freedom of expression because people were not allowed to 'make jokes about homosexuals and dwarfs'

ern as Methuselah, and what we thought was a victory has turned out to be a swindle. The legislation assimilated hate crimes in the nineties, to avoid discrimination and protect ethnic, cultural, and sexual minorities... In short, those who had suffered beatings and even deaths. Agulló and Rescalvo. Palomino¹⁵ and company. It is not that they were bluffing. It is that they have given such a twist to the tortilla that it has stopped orbiting the earth, and **now the police and fascists are the victims of hate crimes**. Just ask Quequé¹⁶ and his case. **This perversion of the lexicon also alters the frameworks of social debate**, contaminating public opinion with hoaxes and nonsense. The mantra of *wokeism*. The centre appears as an extreme. Such is the social impasse we are in that your average mansplainer passes for a fascist, human rights are tendentious and radical, and the most basic mediocrity seems even revolutionary. The whole framework has shifted and always to the same side. What is dastardly is moderate, and common sense has been dynamited.

The implosion of social consensus —too much doubt about what we all thought was right and too little doubt about what we already knew was wrong— has manifested itself not only in reels, but also in the streets. However, the guarantors of order have taken it upon themselves to apply **a blatant double standard** in the preparation of the police arrangements. While some equate fascism with Antifascism, others might appear to be wearing the shirt of one of the two teams under their uniform. Two hours before the convocation, both in Tirso de Molina or in Sentmenat, a blue army was waiting with truncheon in hand for one side, while the other side was committing unconstitutional crimes under its protection. The double standards are not only reflected in police actions, but the **judicial asymmetry** is nothing short of astounding: despite the pardons, there are still some of the Zaragoza Six¹⁷ in jail, and history is repeating in Bilbao. But fascism parades through the streets with impunity after a good part of its cases have been systematically shelved.

And the problem is not only fascism. It is to watch with astonishment the domino effect every day. It is to see how everything turns bitter. **The institutions**, without targeting anyone and everyone at the same time, whatever their colour, **have taken a tremendous turn towards authoritarianism**. And we have normalised it. We have normalised exception and even genocide! We have dragged the threshold of what is tolerable into a new reality. An after-effect of public space policing and preventive repression (mass identification, drones and cameras everywhere, “informative” searches and dissuasive devices). Disproportion before the conflict even exists. We have accepted bureaucratic repression and pre-emptive control of dissent (demonstration with prior notice, administrative restrictions, “security” demands that make protest unviable).

Governments little suspected of having sympathies with the moustached one have uncritically jumped on the **bandwagon of this doctrine**, seeking order as an end in itself, using health and safety as a throwaway argument to execute policies on foreigners which, if not outright racist, are borderline racist. Initiatives such as the *Pla Endreça* (meaning to

15. Infamous cases of people killed by nazi groups in Spain.

16. Spanish journalist and comedian charged with hate crimes.

17. Activists facing long prison sentences for protesting a rally of the far-right party Vox in Zaragoza in 2019.

straighten or clean up)¹⁸ of the Barcelona City Council paved the way for events such as the eviction of the B9 in Badalona¹⁹, the largest eviction in the history of the whole country. We have even seen evictions with PPEs! And what is worse, citizens who, encouraged by their mayor, prevented community members to assist and help to the people who had been deprived of a roof over their heads. When the protest comes up against the border cordon, it is met with even more and harsher repression and criminalisation.

And although May, Jean Paul Sartre, and Paris are still a long way off²⁰, there is good news amidst all the grey clouds. **Protesting is back in fashion.** 380 cases of repression in 2025 are due, in part, to an increase in mobilisations on a global scale throughout the country. And this is clearly positive. Because people are reacting to this authoritarian drift, to the rise of fascism and the reduction of rights. **Protest is also a thermometer of the democratic health of society.** It is **the main tool we have to defend our rights**, and at the same time, it is our only hope. Far from succumbing to the chilling effect, to the dissuasion that every repressive act pursues, the repression of protest has backfired. The social movements and grassroots organisations have turned the sock upside down: we have filled the streets with struggle and joy. We are determined to continue to mobilise, to move forward and to fight, not just for some crumbs, but for rights, for the future and for our ideas regarding the common good.

And that is encouraging.

18. Plan introduced by the City council in 2023 to punish antisocial behaviour which has been heavily criticized by civil society actors.

19. Some hundred homeless people were evicted from a squatted building and left to live on the street in cold temperatures and in the rain.

20. Reference to a popular Spanish song wrote by Ismael Serrano.

[CHAPTER 5]

PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE IN CONTEXTS OF PROTEST AND REDUCTION OF CIVIC SPACE

Lluís Elias and Esther Fraile, *Centro Sira*

The right to peaceful protest, constitutionally recognised and protected by international human rights law, is an essential manifestation of freedom of expression and political participation. However, in contexts of increasing restriction of civic space, criminalisation of dissent and normalisation of control practices, protests are increasingly taking place in scenarios marked by threats, surveillance and possible repressive scenarios. In recent years, various international bodies have documented a **process of shrinking civic space** characterised by increased regulatory restrictions, expanded use of administrative sanctions, intensified surveillance and stigmatisation of dissent.

As the **UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association warns**, this increase in repression and the associated cost of mobilisation runs the risk of **a chilling effect**. From a psychosocial perspective, this process not only operates through explicit norms or sanctions, but also through the production of fear, emotional exhaustion and collective fragmentation, directly affecting the sustainability of collective action and its replicability in different contexts, **as we pointed out in previous reports**.

However, if repression is increasing and the perceived cost of mobilising is high, why do we continue to mobilise? Participation in protest is not a linear relationship with repression or a purely symbolic or reactive act. It is based on the perception of injustice, the shared identity, the belief system and values of those who mobilise, and the belief —individual and collective— in the collective efficacy or capacity to have an impact through these actions.²¹

Thus, the decision to participate, from a psychosocial point of view, is much more complex and depends not only on the objective existence of risks, but also on the subjective perception of the costs, the degree of identification with the cause and the shared framework of interpretation. When people perceive serious rights violations, closure of institution-

21. Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*.

al channels or normalisation of injustice, protest becomes a form of coherence between values and action. Consequently, under certain conditions, a **backfire effect**²² can occur and participation increases. This occurs, particularly when the repressive response is perceived as unjust or disproportionate and becomes publicly visible, which can strengthen internal cohesion, broaden solidarity and reinforce the legitimacy of the movement.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS AND COLLECTIVE COPING

Analysis of the chilling effect is essential to understanding how repression and criminalisation seek to produce political disengagement. However, focusing exclusively on the effectiveness of intimidation may inadvertently contribute to consolidating the perception that demobilisation is inevitable.

From a psychosocial point of view, the analysis **cannot be limited to the damage**. It is also necessary to identify, make visible and strengthen the processes by which people and collectives transform threat into cohesion and fear into organisation. Focusing on the backfire effect does not mean denying the risks but **disputing the interpretative framework** that presents repression as necessarily successful.

In this sense, we can understand that direct or indirect exposure to contexts of criminalisation, threat, or repression can generate emotional responses (fear, anguish, indignation, anger, guilt, sadness or shame) and psychophysiological responses associated with the activation of the stress system (accelerated breathing, palpitations, muscular tension, hypervigilance or a feeling of unreality). However, these responses should not automatically be interpreted as indicators of individual fragility or political disengagement, but as **adaptive responses and protective mechanisms** in the face of environments perceived as highly hostile.

In this way, these psychophysiological emotions and responses, far from necessarily leading to withdrawal and inhibition of participation, can be transformed into mobilising energy when they find a collective framework that legitimises and channels them. **Resilience**, in this sense, is not limited to individual resistance, but constitutes a collective process of organisation and social support. Some of the **keys to transforming and building resilience** are:

- Strengthening cohesion and the perception of collective efficacy before mobilisation through **grassroots work on the collective fabric**, acting as a protective factor against attempts at fragmentation or intimidation.
- **Prepare and anticipate the development of the protest** to minimise risks, reduce uncertainty, strengthen the collective structure and mitigate subsequent physical and emotional impacts.
- **Facilitate spaces after the mobilisation** to share the experience and collectively elaborate on the experience, avoiding the internalisation of fear as political withdrawal and allowing the experience to be transformed into shared memory and organisational learning.

22. Hess, D. J., & Martin, B. (2006). Repression, backfire, and the theory of transformative events. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 11(2), 249-267.

Thus, incorporating a psychosocial perspective into the analysis and organisational practice makes it possible to: collectivise discomfort by giving it the political-social dimension it has, recognise reactions as responses situated in power relations, design strategies for collective care, strengthen organisational resilience and reduce the effectiveness of fear as a mechanism for demobilisation. From this approach, it is possible to counteract the inhibiting effects of repression and encourage the emergence of dynamics of cohesion, legitimacy and collective strengthening in the face of intimidation.

COUNTERING THE INHIBITING EFFECT: THE CASE OF LA VUELTA

This took the form of accompanying people and groups who took part in mobilisations in support of the Palestinian people during La Vuelta, a paradigmatic example of how repression can generate a backfire effect. The interruption of La Vuelta in different parts of Spain (which is dealt with in chapter “3.2 Case study: Solidarity with Palestine”), as a form of protest against genocide, cannot be seen as an isolated act of disobedience or, according to the worst coverage, as a mere disturbance of public order. In a context of impunity and complicity with genocide, as well as the increasing restriction of civic space and the questioning of the right to protest, this collective action takes on a broad psychosocial and political significance. It was an experience of high symbolic and emotional impact that made a political position visible and, at the same time, challenged the limits of what could be said and what was visible in the public space.

In this context, many people expressed feelings of powerlessness, frustration or guilt in the face of their capacity for advocacy and the perception of international impunity in the face of serious human rights violations. Participation in a concrete and coordinated collective action, with a high media profile, produced a significant shift: **initially paralysing emotions were transformed into shared agency.**

The (shared) experience made it possible to reduce isolation, publicly legitimise unrest and reinforce collective identity in an environment where the exercise of the right to protest was questioned. The symbolic occupation of a highly mediatised public space, such as the interruption of an international sporting event, generated an effect of social validation: emotions experienced in private —anger, sadness, horror at the genocide— acquired collective recognition and were transformed into shared social emotions.

On the other hand, the realisation that an organised action can disrupt normality, attract media attention and open public debate reinforces the perception of **collective efficacy**. Far from producing generalised withdrawal, the mobilisation showed that, in certain contexts, **repression can activate dynamics of cohesion and sustained commitment**, counteracting the logic of silencing that usually accompanies contexts of criminalisation of protest.

From this perspective, actions such as the interruption of La Vuelta contribute to sustaining the capacity to express dissent, to occupy public space and to exercise rights without being paralysed by fear or powerlessness, giving rise to the visibility of other experiences around the narratives of protest. Recognising and strengthening these dynamics is also part of the psychosocial work aimed at sustaining collective action in contexts of serious human rights violations.



[CHAPTER 6]

ADVOCACY IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Karlos Castilla, *Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya*
(*Human Rights Institute of Catalonia*)

In 2025, the *DqD* platform actively participated in two evaluation processes to which the Spanish State was submitted. One, before the United Nations Human Rights Council in what is known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the other, before the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

In the case of the UPR, this is an evaluation made by the 47 member states of the **Human Rights Council**, as well as the other states that act as observers. It is a politically and diplomatically charged evaluation that reviews all the international human rights obligations assumed by the Spanish State.

We participated in this process with a report, in various advocacy spaces with other states, as well as in the session for the adoption of recommendations. Our work, together with that of other organisations, finally led to **324 recommendations** being made. Within our scope of work, by way of example, we can highlight the following recommendations:

- *Adopt measures to limit the use of the Law for the Protection of Citizen Security (“Gag Law”) to restrict freedom of expression and prosecute activists (Algeria).*
- *Amend the Organic Law on the Protection of Citizen Security of 30 March 2015 to bring it in line with European and international human rights standards (Norway).*
- *Revise the Organic Law 4/2015 on the Protection of Citizen Security to protect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly (Canada).*

As for the **Human Rights Committee**, this is an assessment made by the 18 independent experts that make up the Committee, with respect to the obligations contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, so it is a more technical and specialised assessment (conventional).

We participated in this process with an alternative report and in the interactive dialogue with the Committee. As a result of this process, in which other organisations also participated, **59 recommendations** were formulated, which in our specific area of work include, by way of example, the following:

- *Ensure that the principles of necessity and proportionality of the use of force are respected in practice, in line with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.*
- *Ensure that allegations of excessive use of force, including during peaceful assemblies, are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, that alleged perpetrators are prosecuted, and that if found guilty, they are punished and that victims obtain redress.*
- *Ensure that law enforcement officials receive systematic, adequate training on the right to assemble peacefully, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Human Rights Guidelines on the Use of Less Lethal Weapons in the Maintenance of Order.*
- *Establish an independent mechanism with powers to investigate all allegations of torture and ill-treatment by security forces and provide it with sufficient resources to enable it to collect and publish data consistent and disaggregated on such allegations.*
- *Take all necessary measures to ensure that all members of civil society, including politicians, journalists, media workers and human rights defenders, can carry out their work effectively and without fear of reprisals.*
- *Review the applicable regulatory framework, including the Secrets Act of 1968, and ensure that all forms of surveillance and interference with privacy are in full compliance with Article 17 of the Covenant.*
- *Ensure that any intelligence and surveillance measures, including digital surveillance and the use of “undercover intelligence agents”, strictly respect the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and have adequate legal and effective accountability safeguards.*
- *Ensure that all allegations of unlawful surveillance are investigated thoroughly, impartially and effectively, and that victims of such practices have access to effective remedies.*

While none of the recommendations finally addressed to the Spanish state in both periodic evaluation processes are legally binding, they are, on the one hand, a clear reflection of international concerns about what is happening on Spanish territory. On the other hand, they are measures that reinforce the denunciation work that various organisations are carrying out internally, and, at the same time, they are minimum parameters that should serve to promote legislative and public policy changes if we want to affirm that there is full respect for human rights in Spain.

From *DqD*, we express our support and backing for these and other international human rights mechanisms, especially today when the White House is trying to attack and dismantle them for being spaces that shed light on the obscurity of impunity.

[CHAPTER 7]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cèlia Carbonell, *Irídia - Centre per la defensa dels drets humans*

1. ENSURE, PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Repeal the precepts of **Organic Law 4/2015 on the Protection of Citizen Security** that violate freedom of expression and assembly, and incorporate the main demands of civil society in the reform underway:

- Eliminate penalties for “disrespecting” officers and for publishing images of security forces, and limit offences for disobedience and resistance to minor and objective cases.
- Recognise the right to spontaneous demonstrations without prior notification.
- Abolish the presumption of veracity of agents when it affects fundamental rights.
- Establish clear criteria for body searches on public roads and specific protocols for transgender people and other gender dissidents.

Amend **Organic Law 10/1995 of 23 November 1995 on the Penal Code** in relation to provisions limiting freedom of expression and the right of assembly:

- Repeal Articles **490 and 491** of the Penal Code on slander and insult to the Crown, **Article 525** on offences to religious feelings and **Article 578** on glorification of terrorism, to ensure that expressions that do not constitute advocacy of hatred, discrimination or violence are not criminalised.
- Amend articles **570 and 573** of the Penal Code to prevent the right of assembly, civil disobedience and non-violent political action from being considered terrorism or organised crime, bringing their definition into line with international standards established by EU Directive 2017/541.

Guarantee the right of civil society, journalism and communications professionals, human rights observers, activists and human rights organisations to **record, document and monitor the actions of law enforcement and security forces in public**, including the recording of police actions in contexts of protest as part of the exercise of the right to information and accountability.

2. END POLICE RACISM

Explicitly recognise the existence of **institutional and structural racism** in public administrations, political authorities and law enforcement agencies, as well as the presence of **Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism** within state structures, as a necessary step to develop effective tools and strategies for prevention and eradication.

Explicitly prohibit by law the **use of racial profiling** in police stops and searches, establishing a legal framework that clearly defines racial profiling and recognises it as a form of discrimination. Establish a **mandatory criterion of reasoned suspicion** that justifies any police action, based on evidence and objective information indicating the possible commission of a crime, and precisely define the concepts of **reasonable suspicion** and **reasonably necessary concurrent circumstances** provided for in articles **13 and 16 of Organic Law 4/2015 on the protection of citizen security**.

Incorporate a **system of forms in police stops and searches** that includes:

- a clear and reasoned justification for the action,
- the outcome of the intervention,
- the ethno-racial status perceived by the officer and the self-perceived status of the person concerned.

Ensure that these forms are applied in accordance with the principles of **informed consent and confidentiality**, that **one copy** is given **to the person concerned** and another to the registry of the competent body of each police force, and that they are designed with the **participation of civil society and groups of racialised people**.

3. CLARIFY AND PROHIBIT STATE ESPIONAGE

Reform **Law 9/1968 on official secrets**, **Law 11/2002 regulating the National Intelligence Centre (CNI)** and **Law 2/2002 on prior judicial control of the CNI**, adopting a legal framework for intelligence activity that respects the principles of **legality, legitimate purpose, necessity, proportionality, competent authority, effective judicial protection, user notification, transparency, public oversight, security, certification and technical adequacy**. Ensure that **no invasive spying techniques such as Pegasus, Candiru or similar spyware are used under any circumstances**, in line with the safeguards set out by the [Venice Commission in its report of 13 December 2024](#) on the regulation of spyware in accordance with the rule of law and human rights.

Implement an **immediate moratorium on the purchase and use of spying systems** until effective safeguards are in place to protect human rights, ceasing any operations of a similar nature and refraining from purchasing, developing or using technologies that may have a disproportionate impact on fundamental rights.

Declassify information relating to the **use of Pegasus and police infiltration** to allow for independent, effective and thorough investigations into all cases of police spying and infiltration in Spain.

Amend **Organic Law 2/1986 on Security Forces and Corps** and the laws regulating the regional police forces to incorporate the express prohibition of “intelligence agents” acting under fictitious identity in the prevention of crimes that do not fall within the scope of organised crime and the fight against terrorism provided for in Article 282 bis of the Criminal Procedure Act.

4. RESTRICT AND REGULATE POLICE WEAPONS

Prohibit the use of **rubber bullets and all types of foam projectiles** by the Security Forces and Corps, assess their impact on citizens and establish **reparation measures for those affected**.

Prohibit **biometric technologies** that enable mass surveillance or discriminatory targeted surveillance. Prohibit the **development, deployment and commercialisation of emotion recognition** because of its inefficiency, pseudo-scientific nature and weak evidence base. Prohibit **systems that create or expand biometric databases** by capturing Internet or CCTV images without a legal basis and without consent. Reject **disproportionate exceptions** based on national security, law enforcement or military needs. Prohibit the **export of artificial intelligence systems incompatible with human rights**.

Ensure that any **use of surveillance technologies** that involves interference with privacy or data protection meets the international standard: legitimate purpose, clear legal basis and strict necessity in a democratic society. Suspend or withdraw **surveillance technology systems** that do not meet standards of proportionality or transparency. Review **contracts, pilot projects and real-world testing** of surveillance technologies, and eliminate regulatory gaps or grey areas.

5. END IMPUNITY FOR POLICE VIOLENCE

Ensure **effective accountability mechanisms** in all documented cases by strengthening reporting channels and ensuring that they are **accessible, safe and effective** for affected persons, as well as promoting **collective reporting** mechanisms that reduce barriers to individual reporting.

Publish the **use-of-force protocols of all police forces** with the level of detail necessary to allow for public knowledge and citizen oversight. Publish **disaggregated data** on judicial or internal proceedings initiated against police officers for alleged crimes of torture, moral integrity, sexual assault, injury or illegal detention, including the number of **complaints, allegations, convictions, sanctions and types of sanctions**.

Review and **harmonise protocols for the use of force, police tools and weapons** of all police forces in the state to ensure their compliance with **international human rights standards** and manufacturers’ technical specifications.

Ensure **360° identification on the uniforms of law enforcement officers (riot police)** of the various police forces by means of a **visible, legible and easily remembered identification number** on the front and back of the uniform and on the sides of the helmet.

Create and maintain publicly accessible registers of all algorithmic systems used by public and private actors. Mandate registration also during pilots and real-world testing. Require effective and comprehensible explainability: citizens must know what system has been used, how and with what impact.

Create by law an **external and independent police oversight mechanism**, accountable to the **Congress of Deputies and the Parliament of Catalonia**, with sufficient capacity, budget and independence to investigate ex officio police or private security conduct or practices in public functions that involve death, injury, torture, sexual assault, discrimination or excessive use of force. Ensure that this mechanism has **access to all necessary information**, powers to **assess the suitability of police weapons and tools**, to supervise **internal protocols and regulations** and to carry out **specialised expertise** in the framework of judicial investigations.



[ANNEXES]

FIGURE 1. PEOPLE AFFECTED IN VIOLATIONS BY AREA OF MOBILISATION

	Fine	Identifi- cation	Physical and moral integrity	Deten- tion	Infiltra- tion	Judicial repression*	Censor- ship	Retention/ Circulation	Burglary*	Uniden- tified police*	Other*	
Solidarity with Palestine	39	46	118	115	19	18	13	25	2	4	21	420
Housing and squatting	119	243	128	76	2	136	0	3	0	2	3	712
Antifascism	7	24	73	32	0	96	0	21	1	6	11	271
Freedom of expression	1	3	13	6	0	14	5	3	0	0	0	45
Catalan inde- pendence	0	22	1	1		34	3	1	0	0	2	64
Trade unionism	0	13	23	32		7	2	1	1	0	6	85
Popular festivals	1	51	4	4	0	29	3	1	6	0	4	103
Environ- mentalism	0	0	3	8	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	32
LGBTIQ+	0	1	30	6	1	0	2	11	0	0	0	50
DANA Management	1	30	5	19	0	0	1	52	1	1	1	111
Anti-racism	0	4	5	8	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	22
Public Space	0	1	3	21	0	0	1	20	1	0	2	49
Other	2	26	13	14	0	25	5	26	3	0	5	119
total	170	464	419	342	0	381	37	164	16	13	55	2083
%	8,16%	22,28%	20,12%	16,42%	22	18,29%	1,78%	7,87%	0,77%	0,62%	2,64%	100%

* Add explanations for the asterisks: See section "2.1. Methodological note: How to read the data"

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED

FAMILY	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Solidarity with Palestine	665
Housing and squatting	353
Antifascism	224
Popular festivals	96
DANA Management	89
Trade unionism	70
Catalan Independence	57
Freedom of expression	42
Environmentalism	31
Public Space	26
LGBTIQ+	16
Anti-racism	12
Other	90
TOTAL	1771

FIGURE 6. NUMBER OF CASES, VIOLATIONS AFFECTED PERSONS BY TERRITORY

TERRITORY	N° OF PERSONS	TERRITORY	N° OF VIOLATIONS	TERRITORY	N° CASES
Catalonia	847	Catalonia	987	Catalonia	194
Valencian Community	240	Valencian Community	278	Madrid	61
Madrid	225	Madrid	261	Valencian Community	27
Navarre	135	Navarre	139	Andalusia	21
Andalusia	74	Andalusia	80	Basque Country	18
Basque Country	52	Basque Country	64	Navarre	17
Aragon	46	Galicia	64	Balearic Islands	11
Galicia	43	Balearic Islands	56	Galicia	8
Balearic Islands	34	Aragon	46	Aragon	5
Canary Islands	28	Canary Islands	46	Asturias	4
Asturias	21	Asturias	15	Castile and Leon	4
Castile-La Mancha	17	Castile-La Mancha	25	Canary Islands	3
Castile and Leon	5	Castile and Leon	6	Castile-La Mancha	3
Cantabria	2	Cantabria	2	Cantabria	2
Murcia	2	Murcia	2	Murcia	2

FIGURE 7. MOST VIOLATED AREAS OF MOBILISATION IN EACH TERRITORY

TERRITORY	AREAS OF MOBILISATION	% CASES	Nº OF CASES
Catalonia	Solidarity with Palestine	25,77 %	50
	Housing and squatting	20,62 %	40
	Antifascism	17,53 %	34
Madrid	Solidarity with Palestine	18,03 %	11
	Housing and squatting	16,39 %	10
	Freedom of expression	14,75 %	9
Valencian Community	DANA Management	33,33 %	9
	Antifascism	18,52 %	5
	Housing and squatting	18,52 %	5
Andalusia	Solidarity with Palestine	23,81 %	5
	Antifascism	9,52 %	2
	Housing and squatting	9,52 %	2
Basque Country	Solidarity with Palestine	27,78 %	5
	Antifascism	22,22 %	4
Navarre	Popular festivals	29,41 %	5
	Antifascism	23,53 %	4
Balearic Islands	Solidarity with Palestine	45,45 %	5
	Housing and squatting	27,27 %	3
Galicia	Solidarity with Palestine	75,00 %	6
Aragon	Solidaridad con Palestina / Housing and squatting	40,00 %	2
Asturias	Solidarity with Palestine	50,00 %	2
Castile and Leon	Solidarity with Palestine	50,00 %	2
Canary Islands	Solidarity with Palestine / Antifascism	33,33 %	1
Castile-La Mancha	Housing and squatting	66,67 %	2
Cantabria	Antifascism / Trade unionism	50,00 %	1
Murcia	Environmentalism	50,00 %	1

GRAPH 10. CALENDAR OF CASES BY FAMILY

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<i>Solidarity with Palestine</i>	5	4	5	0	6	4	2	6	15	41	4	2
<i>Housing and squatting</i>	11	9	14	8	6	4	3	1	0	4	5	2
<i>Antifascism</i>	4	5	9	3	8	2	3	2	4	12	7	
<i>Libertad de expresión</i>	2	1	3	0	3	1	3	1	4	8	2	0
<i>Catalan independence</i>	1	4	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	2	2	0
<i>Trade unionism</i>	1	2	1	0	2	2	3		0	0	1	2
<i>Popular festivals</i>	0	0	0	3	3	0	3	2	0	3	1	0
<i>Environmentalism</i>	0	0	1	3	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	1
<i>LGBTIQ+</i>	0	5	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	0
<i>DANA Management</i>	1	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
<i>Anti-racism</i>	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
<i>Public Space</i>	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Others</i>	5	2	6	1	6	3	2	2	0	2	4	1

defenderaquiendefiende.org

[] DEFENDER
A QUIEN DEFIENDE