

Human Rights Council

40th regular session of the Human Rights Council

25 February 2019 – 22 March 2019

**Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention - General Debate**

**Read by : Dr. Paul Newman**

Mr. President,

There is an urgent need to release the 9 Catalanian political prisoners under duress and facing false charges by the Spanish authorities. They are confined to illegal detention since October 2017.

Spain has imposed unsustainable charges of sedition and rebellion against Catalonia's leaders . Their detention by Spain is an affront to human rights and democracy designed to prevent them from performing their role as political representatives and social leaders of the Catalan people.

The Spanish authorities have converted the right to assembly and demonstration, into a crime of rebellion. **Neither the events of 20 September 2017 and October 2017, led to the violence as required in Article 472 of the Spanish Criminal Code as this crime requires a violent public uprising which never happened.**

After spending 15 months of pre-trial detention, these political prisoners are facing severe violations of their basic rights as the trials have begun in Madrid. If natural justice has to prevail, the case has to be moved to a neutral venue to ensure justice.

Spain has obligations to protect freedom of expression, including political expression, under Article 19 of the ICCPR.

he detained leaders, stood for the ideology that represents the freedom to live and exist as a people of Catalonia. They upheld the Right to Self Determination. The UNHRC and the International community must immediately intervene and release all the political prisoners and drop the false charges against them.

Thank you