

15 October 2019

## Spain: Catalan human rights defender Jordi Cuixart sentenced to 9 years in prison

On 14 October 2019, Catalan human rights defender **Jordi Cuixart** was found guilty on charges of sedition and sentenced to 9 years in prison. Jordi Cuixart was arrested shortly after he publicly promoted a peaceful demonstration in Catalonia on 20 September 2019 as well as the referendum on independence of Catalonia on 1 October 2019. Before this sentencing, Jordi Cuixart had been held in preventive detention since his arrest on 16 October 2017.

[Jordi Cuixart](#) is the president of Òmnium Cultural, a non-governmental organisation founded in 1961 in response to the censorship and persecution experienced by Catalan culture under the Franco dictatorship. As well as working to promote and preserve the Catalan language and cultural heritage, Òmnium Cultural has been actively involved in the promotion and defence of human rights in Catalonia. The organization has helped to organise a number of peaceful demonstrations in support of the right of people in Catalonia to free and democratic self-determination.

On 21 March 2018, four months after his case was merged with those of 13 other defendants, Jordi Cuixart was indicted with “sedition” by the investigating judge of the Supreme Court. He was accused of actively campaigning in favour of the referendum on independence in Catalonia held on 1 October 2017, which had been suspended by the Constitutional Court. The charge is mainly based on the accusation that he organised the protests on 20 September 2017 in front of the Catalan Department of Economy which sought to impede a police operation ordered by the court in various public buildings related to the referendum. Prior to the protests, Jordi Cuixart specifically emphasized on social media and other platforms the peaceful nature of the mobilisations. Footage shows the human rights defender standing on a police car during the protests attempting to calm down and disband a lively crowd protesting against the detention of referendum organisers.

On 14 October 2019, the Judicial Chamber for Criminal Cases of the Spanish Supreme Court sentenced nine Catalan leaders, including human rights defender Jordi Cuixart, to prison terms of up to 13 years for sedition and other offences.

The [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) has found seven cases of Catalan leaders to be arbitrary, including Jordi Cuixart's, and has urged Spain to release those who have been detained. As stated by [International Trial Watch](#), [FIDH](#) and [Euromed Rights](#), the trials were held with numerous irregularities and infringements on the right to a fair trial. [Amnesty International](#), [OMCT](#), [UN Special Rapporteurs](#) and [Council of Europe](#) have also expressed their concerns about the case of Jordi Cuixart and have urged Spanish authorities to release him.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the conviction for sedition against human rights defender Jordi Cuixart as it believes it resulted from his legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Spain to:

1. Immediately quash the conviction and release Jordi Cuixart as it is believed that it is solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression;

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Spain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment and criminalisation.