



**PEN International's Writers for Peace Committee
Statement on the Catalan Referendum**

3 October 2017

We, the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International, express our grave concern over the events that marred the show of democratic will by the people in the recent Catalan referendum. The scenes of armed, masked police officers assaulting peaceful citizens of all ages should be a matter of shame for the Spanish Government, as is the lack of a meaningful response from the Council of the European Union.

The action would be outrageous in any society; however, this is especially so in a country that has prided itself on emerging as a democracy from dark days of civil war and dictatorship. As Writers for Peace, we are deeply concerned that the political and actual wounds of those decades should not be re-opened.

We deplore the violence used by the forces of the Spanish state against the people of Catalonia on 1 October 2017.

We believe that a dispute between governments can never be a just reason for unleashing violence on peaceful citizens seeking to give their opinion through voting. Neither can an order from a court be the reason to use excessive force to prevent the free and legitimate expression of dissent. We believe that in this case, the force used was excessive.

We demand that the right to freedom of expression, whether it is exercised through voting, speaking or writing, be respected by all branches of state authority. We call on all EU Institutions and in particular on the European Parliament to remind Spain of the limits that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights put on its actions.