



PACE Rapporteur calls on Spain, Turkey to include opponents, journalists in prison amnesty

By **SCF**

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Boriss Cilevics, PACE rapporteur on “Should politicians be prosecuted for statements made in the exercise of their mandates?” has [called on](#) Spain and Turkey to include imprisoned politicians in early releases prompted by the threat posed by the Coronavirus in overcrowded prisons.

Rapporteur Cilevics welcomed the measures aimed at releasing from prison non-violent prisoners but underlined the importance of inclusion of Catalan and Turkish politicians, journalists and civil society actors to the amnesty regulations.

"I welcome the measures taken in many countries to release from prison non-violent prisoners who do not pose a threat to society or to apply non-custodial sanctions to them. This is the right thing to do in the face of the threat posed by the spread of the Coronavirus in prisons," he said.

"Prisoners with political backgrounds, such as the Catalan politicians convicted for their role in the unconstitutional referendum in October 2017, or the Turkish parliamentarians, mayors and other politicians imprisoned for speeches made in the exercise of their mandate, should certainly benefit from such measures," added Mr Cilevics.

"Having personally met the Catalan colleagues during my fact-finding visit to Spain last February, I am fully convinced that these women and men pose no threat to anyone. The very fact of their detention causes concern, but the COVID-19 crisis should definitely prompt their release. The same is true for the imprisoned Turkish opposition politicians, journalists and civil society actors."

Turkish government has presented an early parole bill to the parliament on 31 March aimed at reducing inmate population of country's overcrowded prisons vis-à-vis Coronavirus pandemic. The bill, which excluded political prisoners such as politicians, journalists, lawyers, academics and human right defenders convicted on country's controversial counter-terrorism laws prompted calls from UN and [EU](#) on non-discriminatory reduction of prison populations.