

PACE rapporteur urges Spain, Turkey to free politicians

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PACE rapporteur called on Spain and Turkey to release politicians under amnesty in connection with the coronavirus pandemic.

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.

"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."

On March 31, the Turkish government submitted a draft parole bill to Parliament aimed at reducing the number of prisoners in overcrowded prisons in the country due to the coronavirus pandemic. A bill that excluded political prisoners convicted on the basis of the country's conflicting anti-terrorism laws. UN and EU call on Turkey to non-discriminately reduce the prison population.

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