

# PROXY OBSERVER

SEÑALAMOS A LOS CULPABLES DE LA VIOLENCIA

## Spot Report on “Funeral Cortege” Protest Against Spain’s New Gag Law.

Prepared for:

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### INTRODUCTION:

The following is a brief “Spot Report” for the purpose of informing the OSCE on the latest political protest to take place in Spain against a new gag law known as “*Ley de seguridad ciudadana*” (*Ley Mordaza*).

### LOCATION & DATE OF PROTEST:

The “funeral cortege” style protest took place in Madrid on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December at 19:00. The same day as *International Human Rights Day* and a mere 24 hours before the ruling right wing political party in Spain was due to vote in a new gag law, which would limit the civil rights of all Spanish citizens.

### THE ORGANISERS:

The event was organised by various social groups, but was mainly the work of a social group known as @NoSomosDelito, who have campaigned hard to inform the public on the impact that these changes are likely to have on citizens’ rights, including the right to organise and protest peacefully.

### BACKGROUND TO THE PROTEST:

As previously mentioned in this report, the day after social rights groups “mourned the death” of their civil and legal rights, the government pushed through a new gag law, against the wishes of the vast majority of Spanish citizens, and of all other political parties in Spain.

Even so, protestors exercised their right to peaceful protest calmly, as they have always done, and with dignity in the face of a slowly creeping dictatorship in Spain.

It is worth noting, that under Spain's new gag law, events such as this are likely to be dispersed by police without the requirement of written permission from a judge.

Judges too, will play no part in deciding what economic sanctions to apply, as it will be the police themselves who will act as judges and impose sanctions of up to 600,000€ for organising protests.

### **THE EVENT:**

The "funeral cortege" gathered at 19:00 in an area of Madrid known as Opera. Police presence was low-key, with only one police van and five *antidisturbios* (riot police) present.

The organisers marched in silence along the road without blocking traffic, and without the need of a police cordon. No police officers were present, and no trouble was reported.

The cortege arrived at the main gathering point (*Puerta del Sol*) approximately an hour later, where a funeral wreath and candles awaited. A manifesto rejecting the new law was read out, and the crowd slowly dispersed.

### **POLICE PRESENCE:**

Police presence was noticeably higher in *Puerta del Sol*, the area where protestors had arranged to gather, and although the police made no attempt to disrupt the event, their presence was at times intimidating.

As usual, the notoriously violent "Puma" police units arrived armed with guns, and stood at the corner of the plaza, many with their faces covered. The number of police vans too, was considerably higher than at the earlier meeting point.

Other police units were also present, including the slightly less aggressive local police force known as "policia Municipal". This display of force was totally unnecessary as most of the protestors were senior citizens and law abiding Madrid residents.

### **INJURIES and ARRESTS**

No injuries or arrests were reported. No searches or mass ID checks were carried out. The police did not video tape those present at the event as has become the norm.

## **SECRET POLICE & INFILTRATORS:**

Unlike other occasions secret police were not present, or kept a very low profile. There was no attempt by “agent provocateurs” to disrupt the protest.

## **THE AUTHORITIES**

The authorities in Spain have consistently ignored calls from social movements to drop this draconian law. But unlike previous protests, the delegation in Madrid this time did not respond with repression or police violence, and instead allowed the protest to go ahead unhindered.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We suggest that the OSCE reminds Spanish authorities of the importance of avoiding public alarm, something which large numbers of armed and heavily armoured riot police can cause.

Good communication on the part of the police and a willingness to co-operate with protest organisers can often help ease tensions and ensure public safety. We recommend the delegation in Madrid adopt this policy.

## **REPORT CONCLUSIONS:**

Our conclusion is that this event proves that peaceful protests in Spain are possible, and that a repressive “citizen security law” is unnecessary. What is needed is a change of attitude in both the authorities and the police with regard to citizens’ right to protest.

That change in attitude appears to have been an important factor in the peaceful outcome of this protest, and we ask the OSCE to encourage Spanish authorities to maintain this attitude.

Report dated: 13/December/2014

## **Relevant Videos:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZNEjQoyqEg>

For more information, photographs and videos on this event visit our website:  
<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com>

