

PROXY OBSERVER

SEÑALAMOS A LOS CULPABLES DE LA VIOLENCIA

Spot Report: Tragedy in Tarajal "*Circles of Silence*" Protest in Spain and Europe

Prepared for:

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INTRODUCTION:

The following is a spot report prepared by *Proxy Observer* with the aim of informing the OSCE / ODHIR on the event which took place in Spain and across Europe known as *Circulos de Silencio* (*Circles of Silence*).

The *Circles of Silence*, or candle lit vigils, had the objective of commemorating the first anniversary of the violent deaths of an estimated 15 **African immigrants** at the hands of Spanish *Guardia Civil* on a beach in Ceuta (North Africa).

BACKGROUND TO THE PROTEST

The shootings and drownings on Tarajal beach (Ceuta) have never been fully investigated by an independent commission. Indeed, it is thought that the number of **deaths** of immigrants could be much higher than that reported.

A recent video published by [El Diario.es](#) revealed many inconsistencies in the *Guardia Civil* reports, and the ever-changing statements made in parliament by Spanish *Interior Minister*, Jorge Fernández Díaz.

GUARDIA CIVIL SUMMONED:

In the same week as the *Circles of Silence* event was organised, a Spanish judge summoned **16 Guardia Civil** guards (Paramilitary police) to appear in court and answer questions about the border deaths.

Almost the same day, the camp located in the hills around *Ceuta*, with more than 1.200 immigrants waiting to cross the border, was completely **razed** by 600 Moroccan soldiers, and many of the African immigrants were beaten and forced on buses which took them to an unknown location.

LOCATION & DATE OF PROTEST

The *Circles of Silence* event was scheduled for the 6th February to coincide with the first anniversary of the *Tarajal* tragedy. Although in *Ceuta* itself, the anniversary of the deaths was celebrated the following day.

In **Berlin** (Germany), **Granada** (Spain) and the Spanish capital Madrid, the event was scheduled for Friday 18:30. Other cities including: Barcelona, Tangier, Dusseldorf, London, Bilbao and others, also participated. Additional presentations were celebrated that same morning in Madrid.

PROTEST ORGANISERS:

The *Circles of Silence* events appear to have been organised by local groups and NGO / Human Rights organisations working closely with immigrants living in Europe.

In some cities, for example Berlin, the organising of the event was far superior to that of other European cities. This leads as to conclude that some of these events were organised by small ad-hoc groups with perhaps fewer resources and contacts.

THE EVENT:

The concept of the *Circles of Silence* was that of a group of people standing silently in a circle to commemorate the anniversary of the *Tarajal* deaths. In the centre of the circle, photographs of the **victims**, candles, messages and flowers were laid.

In **Berlin**, 15 stark coffins to represent each of the victims, were positioned side by side with many members of the African community present to pay their respects and express their anger at the handling of this tragedy by *Ceuta* authorities.

The events in mainland Spain were far less dignified. In *Granada*, the *Circle of Silence* is reported to have been broken up by Spanish police, according to at least one **Tweet** by someone who was present at the event.

In Madrid the sense of fear and intimidation was palpable in the *Puerta del Sol*, where the event appears to have been hurriedly aborted by the organisers. Perhaps for fear of being identified or harassed by the authorities.

While it is true that the event in Madrid received very little publicity on social media (*Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc), there was a small supportive crowd of people waiting to participate in the *Puerta del Sol*. Unfortunately, they left disappointed.

We also saw at least one African immigrant waiting patiently for others to arrive at the meeting point, but he left quickly when Spanish police vans parked very near the spot.

POLICE PRESENCE:

In our opinion, the presence of relatively large numbers of anti-riot police (*antidisturbios*) in the *Puerta del Sol*, completely wrecked this peaceful event. In the case of Granada, the harassment was blatantly deliberate. In Madrid, perhaps not entirely.

Unfortunately for the organisers of the *Circle of Silence* in Madrid, their event coincided exactly (location, date, time) with a protest by striking *Coca Cola* workers. This meant that police numbers were unusually high in the *Puerta del Sol*. All of which may have had a dissuasive effect on the less experienced Circle organisers.

INJURIES and ARRESTS

As previously mentioned in this report, Granada was the scene of totally unjustified police interference in a perfectly legal act. There, the Circle organisers were forced to pack up and leave the area under the threat of an economic sanction. It is only because the organisers co-operated with police that no arrests were made.

In addition, police in Madrid were far too close to the area where the event was scheduled to take place. Some UIP police officers even had their faces covered. This lack of sensitivity no doubt deterred undocumented immigrants, and may explain why no-one showed up.

SECRET POLICE & INFILTRATORS:

Regardless of whether secret police were present in the *Puerta del Sol*, armed UIP police officers were very much present and highly visible. This fact was enough to ensure that worried foreigners and immigrants kept their distance for fear of being identified as "illegal" (undocumented).

THE AUTHORITIES

Spanish authorities have consistently tried to minimise the political fallout stemming from the Ceuta tragedy. The Interior Minister's attempt to convince parliament that the deaths were "accidental drownings" were based on false *Guardia Civil* reports.

We now know that the deaths in Tarajal (Ceuta) were the result of paramilitary police brutality, and that many of the dead were shot in the head with rubber bullets by the *Guardia Civil* from both the shore and the sea.

Spain's ultra conservative government continues to cover up these obvious facts, and tries to play down the shootings for fear of criminal charges being brought against both the *Guardia Civil* and the Interior Minister, Jorge Fernández Díaz.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS:

In our opinion the OSCE / ODIHR needs to understand the events surrounding this protest in the context of a worrying political situation. The government in Madrid does not wish to see high profile protests on the issue of border clashes or immigrant deaths in Ceuta.

The break up of the *Circle of Silence* protest in Granada and the scare tactics used by police in Madrid, contrast sharply with the success of an identical event in Berlin. Likewise, in Madrid the threat of being identified by police and sent to an internment camp for "illegal" foreigners (CIE) had a strong dissuasive effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to keep tracks on the case against the 16 *Guardia Civil* officers summoned over the deaths of 15 African immigrants in Ceuta.

Based on the results of the above mentioned case, we suggest the OSCE / ODIHR looks into the possibility of bringing genocide charges against Jorge fernandez Díaz at the *International Criminal Court* (ICC).

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to monitor closely the treatment African immigrants and foreigners receive in Spain during protests.

We urge the OSCE / ODIHR to ask police authorities in Granada to explain why they broke up a perfectly peaceful candle lit vigil.

We ask the OSCE / ODIHR to condemn the **tactics** used by the *Guardia Civil* in Tarajal Ceuta).

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR clarifies with the Spanish government whether they intend to abide by **European law** with regard to "push backs" (*devoluciones en caliente*).

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR position themselves firmly against the **legalisation** of push backs in Spain's new gag law (Ley Mordaza).

We suggest the OSCE / ODIHR encourages follow-up visits to Spanish CIE's to ensure that Human Rights are being respect, and that no new cases of **torture** go unreported.

We recommend the OSCE / ODIHR raises the issue of **racial quotas** in the identification of foreigners by Spanish police officers, and whether these are still operative.

Report date: 18/February/2015

RELEVANT VIDEOS & PHOTOGRAPHS:

List of cities taking part in the Circles of Silence
<http://goo.gl/PbQEFZ>

VIDEO of Mount Gurugú razed by Moroccan police
<https://vimeo.com/119286555>

Video report of *Guardia Civil* brutality in Tarajal (Ceuta)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzvbAiWoqSs>

Additional photographs and videos:
<http://proxyobserver.weebly.com/tarajal.html>