

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Spain: Use of CCTV – an initial step to address police impunity

Amnesty International welcomes the swift action of the regional autonomous government of Catalonia (Gobierno de la Generalitat) of introducing CCTV cameras to investigate claims of ill-treatment of 2 detainees by 5 law enforcement officers (Mossos d'Esquadra) at a central police station in Barcelona (Les Corts). Footage from the CCTV cameras introduced in the police station provided proof of ill-treatment against the detainees. The organization urges both the regional government of Catalonia and the national government of Spain to introduce audio-visual CCTV cameras within all police stations as an initial first step to end police impunity for torture and ill-treatment. The introduction of audio-visual CCTV cameras should be also extended to persons placed in incomunicado detention.

Amnesty International has expressed its concern on many occasions about reports of ill-treatment and torture perpetrated by members of State security bodies and forces and has supported recommendations made by international bodies such as the Committee against Torture, the European Committee to Prevent Torture and the United Nations Rapporteur calling for video and audio cameras to be installed as a general rule during all police questioning sessions in order to protect not only the rights of detainees but also to prevent false accusations against law enforcement officers. In particular, such equipment should be used in the case of incommunicado detention until such time as it is abolished.

In recent years, Amnesty International has systematically raised concerns about the lack of effective independent and impartial internal mechanisms and proceedings to ensure fair, thorough and prompt investigations of allegations of torture or other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials.

Amnesty International also welcomes the announcement of the regional government of Catalonia to establish a Police Ethics Commission (Comité de Etica de la Policia) and invites the regional government to initiate a thorough and extensive consultation process with representatives of civil society regarding the role, scope and powers of such a commission.

Background

According to the information disclosed to the media by the regional government of Catalonia, during separate incidents in March and April 2007 two persons were arrested and subjected to ill-treatment whilst detained at the Les Corts Central Police Station in Barcelona (Comisaría barrio de Les Corts).

According to the report, on 31 March 2007 a male detainee was repeatedly subject to blows, kicks and insults by four law enforcement officers (two of them trainee officers).

In the second incident on 5 April 2007, a female detainee received two blows while handcuffed by a law enforcement officer.

The six law enforcement officers have been relieved of all their duties and suspended without pay. The investigation comes as a result of footage from CCTV cameras, which were installed inside the police station after a series of ill-treatment allegations by previous detainees.