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Spain: Human rights defender Joan Segura faces trial

On 25 February 2020, human rights defender **Joan Segura** testified in court on charges of active resistance to authorities. The charges are related to his participation in a peaceful protest held by his organisation Stop Desnonaments in Palma de Mallorca, against the eviction of a minor with disability and his parents.

[Joan Segura](#) is a human rights defender with a 19-year history of social activism that since 2011 has focused primarily on defending the right to housing. Currently, he is a spokesperson for **Stop Desnonaments** (Stop Evictions), an organisation founded in 2016 in Mallorca, defending the right to decent housing through peaceful actions against forced evictions, as well as advocacy for better access to social housing. Only in 2019, around 400 families at risk of eviction sought the support of the organisation, and Stop Desnonaments has taken action against approximately 235 eviction orders, of which only 10 have been executed.

On 25 February 2020, Joan Segura testified before the Palma de Mallorca Court of Instruction no. 4 against charges he faces for "serious resistance and disobedience to authority". The human rights defender is now awaiting trial. If found guilty, he could face up to one year in prison.

On 10 December 2019, Joan Segura was arrested by the police in Palma de Mallorca during a peaceful protest held by Stop Desnonaments against the eviction of a minor with disability and his parents. The human rights defender was held at a local police station for a few hours. After requesting habeas corpus, he was transferred to Palma de Mallorca Investigative Court no. 3. The court rejected his request, finding his detention legal. The human rights defender was released on the same day.

Joan Segura lodged an appeal against the rejection of his habeas corpus request by the Court. According to the defender, the police started executing the eviction arbitrarily, hours before the time indicated in the eviction order, making the eviction illegal and thus his own arrest also outside the law. The protest staged by Stop Desnonaments was entirely peaceful. Moreover, Joan Segura was determined to be present on site as he intended to assist the family in negotiating the suspension of their eviction pending the granting of social housing to them. However, he could not accompany the family as he was detained by the police hours before the scheduled time of the eviction.

During the same protest, other members of Stop Desnonaments and protesters were physically attacked by the police. Five of them have been diagnosed with injuries, including the evicted minor with disability. A spokesperson for the organisation, Alma Vives, who has a disability, had her wrist and right shoulder sprained as a consequence of the disproportionate use of force by the police. She submitted a formal complaint on 12 December 2019.

These incidents represent a pattern of harassment of Stop Desnonaments which has intensified drastically since June 2019. Members of Stop Desnonaments have denounced increased restrictions to their right to protest through repeated fines against some of its members, disproportionate use of force by the police and defamatory campaigns.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the charges brought against Joan Segura and the targeting of other members of Stop Desnonaments, including through restrictions to their right to protest. It believes that they have been targeted as a result of their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of social rights, including the right to adequate housing.

Front Line Defenders urges the Spanish authorities to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Joan Segura, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Lift the fines issued against members of Stop Desnonaments and other participants in peaceful mobilisations against evictions, and cease all further harassment of members of the organisation.
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders and organisations in Spain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.