
English Scots for YES

International Visitor Mission Preliminary Statement

Friday October 6th 2017



Preliminary Statement

“On Friday 29th September, myself and our small team of 4 arrived in Catalonia to observe the vote on October 1st. We have combined experience of holding elected office and working as polling clerks and counting agents for decades in UK elections. We were all accredited by the Generalitat de Catalunya as “International Visitors”.

“Our mission was quite simply to observe and report impartially on what we saw and heard in Catalonia, without fear or favour.”

“We are issuing this preliminary statement now, and will release a final report in due course.”

“Despite the small size of our team, we feel our observations will help shed light on places not visited by other observers, and add to wider picture.”

“Our mission took us to 13 polling stations, concentrating in north-eastern Catalonia. We visited stations in Girona and Vilassar de Mar as well as stations in between, from the opening of polls right through to witnessing a count after voting had concluded.”

“We observed polling stations where despite difficulties and massive queues, voting was efficient and continual throughout the day. This must be first and foremost in our report.”

“However, our team also witnessed chaos and devastation not usually associated with elections but with riots instead. We saw polling stations where voting had been completely stopped, windows and doors broken or forced, blood covering the walls and floors, ballot boxes stolen and ordinary voters and their families injured and traumatised.”

“We saw evidence of both physical and technological attempts to completely stop the Catalan people exercising their right to self-determination.”

“The widespread and clearly orchestrated nature of these disruptions make plain this was a deliberate operation by the Spanish state.”

“No democratic nation should ever use armed police to beat voters whose only weapons are ballot papers.”

“We wish to note that despite being obviously afraid, the Catalan people were determined that their votes would be cast and counted; we saw many times the dignified way in which they conducted themselves in the most difficult and abhorrent of circumstances. We saw voters both opposed and in favour of independence joining

together to ensure that everyone who wished to vote was enabled. Helpers provided food and water in hot conditions, and made sure no voters were impeded, including elderly and disabled voters being helped through crowds and given priority.”

“We were welcomed everywhere we went, as voters wanted to be sure the wider world saw and heard their experiences. They saw International Visitors and Observers as key to ensuring the vote was as free and fair as possible, and went to great lengths to aid our observations, guiding us to polling stations and ensuring we had unfettered access.”

“We observed deviations from accepted norms, such as ballot boxes being removed prematurely from polling stations, only to be returned in a sealed and intact state once the threat of removal by Police had passed. These aberrations will be detailed in our full report, but we saw no attempts to manipulate the vote; indeed we saw polling staff, despite absolutely incredible situations, acting in good faith to ensure the vote was fair, free and open. In our view, the vote and its results deserve to be respected.”

“Lastly, I would like to thank our organisation’s supporters in Scotland and elsewhere, without whom the Mission would not have been able to go ahead, and the members of the team for their hard work and dedication.”



Math Campbell-Sturgess
Team Leader
English Scots for YES