The State of the World's Human Rights; Spain 2025

Thousands of evictions continued to be enforced, mostly on economic grounds. A legislative amendment sought to improve access to universal health care. Parliament failed to repeal provisions that violated freedom of expression. Disproportionate restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly persisted. One case was pending before the European Court of Human Rights after Spanish courts refused to investigate torture cases from the Franco era. Unaccompanied migrant children were not duly protected. Spain banned the export of arms to Israel. Authorities failed to comply with commitments on flood risk prevention and management.

Background

In June, the Constitutional Court upheld the 2024 Amnesty Act. This granted amnesty for actions related to the Catalan independence process between 2011 and 2023, including the excessive use of force by police.

In November, the Attorney General was forced to step down after the Supreme Court convicted him for revealing confidential information. The withdrawal by one political party from the coalition government affected the government’s stability and its legislative agenda.

Right to housing

Between January and September there were 19,347 evictions, more than 90% of which were linked to economic reasons. In January, measures to suspend evictions for people in extremely economically vulnerable situations were extended until the end of the year.

Right to health

In September, the central government launched a public consultation on how to reform and improve the 2018 Royal Decree on universal access to public healthcare. Draft amendments to the bill had not been made public by the end of the year.

Freedom of expression

In October, the VOX political party launched a widespread social media campaign of harassment against journalist and writer Cristina Fallarás, who subsequently reported receiving serious threats and abuse. As a result, she cancelled planned public appearances and filed a formal complaint with the public prosecutor against VOX's legal secretary for incitement of hatred, harassment, defamation and violation of privacy.

Parliament failed to undertake reforms to the Public Security Law and the criminal code, such as repealing provisions which violated freedom of expression and decriminalizing libel and slander. These had been widely demanded by civil society and recommended by human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Committee in its concluding observations after reviewing Spain's international obligations in July.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Disproportionate restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly continued, as did the use of excessive force against protests held in solidarity with the Palestinian people. These included acts of civil disobedience such as the Palestinian solidarity protests in the capital, Madrid, in September, which forced the final stage of the Vuelta Ciclista race to be suspended.

A peaceful protester was pardoned and released from prison after a year and a half, following an unjust conviction for public disorder and "assault on authority" based solely on police testimony.

Although criminal courts continued to refuse to investigate cases of police infiltration into social movements, some complaints were pending before the Constitutional Court. A legislative proposal to amend the Criminal Procedure Act in order to prevent such police operations had not been approved by parliament by the end of the year.

Twenty-seven climate activists from the group Futuro Vegetal remained under investigation for allegedly participating in a criminal organization in connection with their involvement in non-violent direct actions.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

In its concluding observations, the UN Human Rights Committee welcomed the adoption of the Democratic Memory Law which aimed to recognize victims of crimes under international law from the civil war and Franco era. The committee expressed concern, however, that the 1977 Amnesty Law had yet to be repealed, and that proceedings initiated against alleged perpetrators of serious human rights violations committed during the Civil War and the Franco era had not resulted in any effective criminal action.

In this regard, following the Constitutional Court's dismissal of several appeals challenging the refusal of Spanish courts to investigate complaints of torture during the Franco era, at least one case was pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

A former high-ranking official during the Franco era continued to be investigated and summoned to testify in relation to crimes committed during Spain's political transition to democracy.

Sexual and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence persisted, with 46 women killed by partners and ex-partners and 15 by other individuals during the year. Three children were killed in the context of gender-based violence.

A number of designated crisis centres intended to provide immediate and specialized assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence were available. In practice, however, many of them were not fully effective as they did not operate around the clock, provide holistic support or ensure effective access to all victims and survivors.

Sexual and reproductive rights

Official data released in October showed that 13 out of 17 autonomous communities had established registers of health professionals refusing to perform abortions on grounds of conscience. Such registers were intended to ensure sufficient staffing and guarantee access to abortion. Private clinics operated if abortions were not available through public healthcare centres, although in some cases patients had to travel outside their region to access these services.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

In March, the Superior Court of Andalucia ruled that returning migrants intercepted at sea around Ceuta to Morocco without safeguards or due process was illegal. The government's representative in Ceuta said that the ruling was not final, implying the intention to disregard or not fully enforce it in the meantime.

The rights of unaccompanied migrant and refugee children were compromised in the Canary Islands and Ceuta. In March, the Supreme Court ordered the central government to urgently implement measures to improve reception conditions for more than 1,000 asylum seeking children. Failure to comply would entail fines or even criminal proceedings against officials responsible. By the end of the year, only 408 children had been transferred to state reception centres.

The Provincial Court of Cádiz convicted both Ceuta's former government representative and the former vice president of the city on charges of administrative malfeasance. It found that they had acted arbitrarily and manifestly unjustly in the expedited repatriation of 55 unaccompanied Moroccan children without the legally required individual assessments.

Irresponsible arms transfers

In October, Spain banned the export of arms to Israel and banned imports from illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in line with its obligations under international law.

Discrimination

In July, xenophobic violence broke out in the village of Torre Pacheco, Murcia Region, following an assault on a 68-year-old man. Anti-rights groups organized “hunts” for racialized people, including specifically those perceived as North African. The unrest was amplified by racist content online, with a 1,500% increase in hate speech against the North African community between 6 and 22 July. On 14 July, a kebab restaurant was attacked by around 50 men wearing helmets and wielding bats and sticks despite a police presence nearby. The owner had to escape out of the back door.

Right to privacy

The former director of the National Intelligence Centre was placed under judicial investigation regarding the use of Pegasus spyware against pro-independence activists and politicians in Catalonia. She invoked the Official Secrets Act, refusing to disclose details on the grounds that the information was classified.

Right to a healthy environment

Following the October 2024 floods that killed 238 people, mostly in the Valencian Community, officials faced scrutiny through ongoing criminal investigations and parliamentary inquiries which sought to determine facts and responsibility.

The government of the Valencian Community and the central government failed to comply with certain commitments outlined in reconstruction plans drawn up following the flooding. These commitments were, respectively, a local flood risk prevention plan and the reform of national flood-risk management regulations. Instead, the regional government adopted Law 2/2025 of 15 April on urgent urban planning measures to support reconstruction after the damage caused by the torrential rains. The law relaxed urban planning rules and permitted construction in flood-prone areas without prior or adequate risk assessment.

Spain registered its worst year on record for wildfires, with more than 392,183 hectares of forests, scrubland and pastures destroyed by the end of October, according to the European Forest Fire Information System. Driven by human-induced climate change, the summer was the warmest on record, with an average temperature of 24.2°C across peninsular Spain, 2.1°C above the 1991-2020 reference period.

The government adopted Royal Decree 214/2025, which established the Carbon Footprint, Compensation and Carbon Absorption Projects Registry. This required certain large companies and public bodies to calculate and publicly disclose their annual greenhouse gas emissions, as well as prepare and publish five-year emission reduction plans.

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