

TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE PROMOTION OF TRUTH, JUSTICE, REPARATION AND GUARANTEES OF NON-RECURRENCE

SUBJECT: Communication regarding the persistence of Francoist-imposed toponymy in Catalonia as a form of cultural repression and a violation of the right to reparation.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE FACTS

This communication informs the mandate-holder of the continued official use of toponymic forms in Catalonia that were imposed by the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975). These names were established with the deliberate aim of degrading and dismantling Catalan cultural and linguistic identity. Specifically, this complaint concerns the current official status of the municipalities of Cabacés, Capmany, Lladó, and Rialp.

2. HISTORICAL AND REPRESSIVE CONTEXT

Democratic Legality: In 1933, the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat) officialized normative toponymy based on the scientific criteria of the Institute for Catalan Studies (IEC), restoring forms such as Cabassers, Campmany, Lledó d'Empordà and Rialb.

Fascist Imposition: Through the Law of April 5, 1938, and subsequent military occupation, the Francoist regime abolished this democratic legality. It imposed pre-normative and Hispanicized spellings (Cabacés, Capmany, Lladó, Rialp) as part of a systematic policy of persecution against the Catalan language. This process is comparable to the toponymic Germanization campaigns carried out by the Third Reich in occupied territories.

Nature of the Violation: According to historical experts and the current Spanish Law on Democratic Memory (Law 20/2022), these spellings are not mere orthographic variants but symbols of political and cultural oppression designed to humiliate the defeated population.

3. VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO REPARATION AND LEGAL CERTAINTY

Despite the entry into force of Law 20/2022 on Democratic Memory and Law 1/1998 on Linguistic Policy (which mandates that official names must follow IEC standards), the situation persists due to administrative inaction. The town councils of Cabacés, Capmany, Lladó and Rialp have not taken any action neither.

This situation also constitutes a clear violation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the principles of Transitional Justice -which require the reparation of the cultural and identity-based damage caused by authoritarian regimes- Resolution IX/4 of the IX United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of October 17, 2003.

This constitutes a violation of the right to moral integrity and a failure to provide reparation to victims of cultural repression.

To read the complete legal report, please refer to <https://transitional.cabassers.org>

4. REQUESTS TO THE SPANISH AND CATALAN GOVERNMENTS

On July 26, 2024, I submitted a request to the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory of the Government of Spain. This request called for the enforcement of the provisions of Law 20/2022 on Democratic Memory to compel the City Council of Cabacés to correct its place name and adopt the correct spelling, Cabassers. I received no response (see attached document 1).

On June 30, 2025, I addressed a request to the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia demanding compliance with Article 18.1 of Law 1/1998 on Linguistic Policy for all official place names that violate it. These include the names imposed by the Franco regime: Cabacés, Capmany, Lladó, and Rialp. I received a formal refusal on July 11, 2025 (document number 2). Surprisingly, the response stated that place names failing to comply with Art. 18.1 of Law 1/1998 on Linguistic Policy are not "illegal place names" but rather "non-normative official place names." However, the Law clearly stipulates that only normative place names (those written according to the linguistic rules of the language) can be official.

5. PETITION

Given that the persistence of these official names constitutes a continuation of the dictatorship's repressive acts within a democratic framework, the Special Rapporteur is requested to:

Urge the Spanish State and the Government of Catalonia to effectively fulfill their obligations regarding reparation and memory by immediately removing official toponyms misspelled by Francoist repression (Cabacés, Capmany, Lladó and Rialp), and to grant official status to the linguistically correct forms of the place names (Cabassers, Campmany, Lledó d'Empordà and Rialb).

Include the issue of "cultural repression" in future reports concerning guarantees of non-recurrence and transitional justice in Spain.

Cabassers, January 21, 2026.

Carles Prats