

## **The Spanish Federation of Family Planning persecuted for defending women's sexual and reproductive rights**

The Ministry of Home Affairs has revoked The Spanish Federation of Family Planning (FPFE)'s status as a public utility<sup>1</sup> after yielding to pressure by the Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers.

The removal of the FPFE as a public utility has serious repercussions not only for the FPFE, but for those relying on its services. This latest attack is yet another in a series of unrelenting political and media persecution carried out by anti-choice pressure groups in Spain.

Despite the obvious legal implications of this recent action taken against the FPFE, and the fact that it does not comply with the law, the ultraconservative lawyers association is essentially violating the right to sexual and reproductive health and a woman's right to decide over her own body.

The resolution by the Ministry of Home Affairs states quite clearly that the FPFE's accounts are all in order and audited. The FPFE complies with all of the requirements that the Ministry itself demands in order to recognize it as a public utility, and has not been sanctioned for "illegal financing" as claimed by various media outlets. A minor administrative fault, cited by the Ministry itself, is basically being used as an excuse to criminalize the FPFE.

Although the Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers claims that the FPFE "promotes abortion", the FPFE does not actually manage any abortion facilities. However, **we will continue to defend safe and legal abortion, alongside international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO)**. We also unequivocally stand for the right of women to decide about their reproductive options. Additionally, we oppose the criminalization and harassment of organizations carrying out safe and legal abortions by ultraconservative pressure groups.

The FPFE was established in 1987 with multiple public and private entities. FPFE has since been providing training, advice and information on family planning and sexual and reproductive health care, with particular attention to vulnerable populations, such as young people, immigrants and young people with intellectual disabilities. Our Youth Centers on Contraception and Sexuality (CJAS) in Barcelona, La Coruña, Albacete and Madrid are known for their good practices and play a complementary role with public health resources.

This resolution by the Ministry, and the concurrent persecution we are undergoing, obviously have harmful effects on the FPFE, and will have an impact on those we serve.

However, the FPFE will continue to carry out their activities from a human rights and health perspective, despite the harassment we may suffer as a result - the very activities that the Ministry of Home Affairs recognized as of public interest until very recently.

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<sup>1</sup> The declaration of public utility is a social recognition of the work done by non-profit entities. For this title it is necessary to meet a series of requirements, contained in the Organic Law 1/2002 of March 22, among which promotion of the general interest, not only of its partners, bring into operation at least two years and not remuneration of the members of its representative bodies with funds and public subsidies. Through the declaration of public utility, NGO can enjoy special tax exemptions and benefits as well as other economic benefits and legal aid.