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DÉCLARATION ORALE

Mr President,

The EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE took notice with great attention of the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review concerning Spain and its various recommendations.

The ECLJ, as an NGO specialized in the defense of freedom of conscience is very disappointed that a major issue has not been properly addressed in this report: I mean the fact that over 50,000 parents have, in the recent years, conscientiously objected to the participation of their children to a compulsory curriculum, in both State and private Schools, because they do not want their children to be indoctrinated against their faith and deep convictions.

The Spanish educational system established a new teaching called "Education for Citizenship" (EFC), that introduces both evaluable and compulsory subjects at Primary and Secondary school. The core subjects of Education for Citizenship have been designed, as the official curriculum states in order to shape the conscience of children, getting deep into their values and their personal and family privacy and, in many cases, conflicting those values. These subjects are strongly rejected by an important part of the Spanish society and nearly 55,000 parents have conscientiously objected to the participation of their children to this compulsory curriculum. Parents have formed more than 70 local and regional associations to support objectors and inform parents and to protest against a direct violation of their fundamental right to educate their children according to their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Nearly 2,300 judicial complaints have been lodged in less than two years as a consequence of Education for Citizenship in the national compulsory curriculum. In most of the cases (aprox. 86%), during the past tree years, local and regional courts sentenced against government. Last year, in 2009, against the opinion of the overwhelming majority of local courts, the Supreme Court denied the rights of the objecting parents,. Some parents have also claimed before the Constitutional Court, which has also dismissed the parents.

Mr President, this case is a major issue concerning freedom of conscience that the Spanish government should redress as soon as possible. The working group should have addressed it

Mr President, in this new school year, hundreds of families will face again the schools and the Courts because they do not want their children to be indoctrinated against their deep faith and convictions.