Some have written to express concerns over APSA’s recent letter addressing the prosecutions in Spain of political scientists and jurists appointed to an Electoral Commission by the Parliament of Catalonia. The American Political Science Association takes no position over the constitutionality or desirability of Catalan secession and shares a deep commitment to the rule of law in democratic societies. Our intent is not to decide issues in the Catalan situation that are legitimately in dispute. Our mission as an association is to protect scholars and their academic freedom. We are always deeply concerned when scholars face prosecution for expression of political views or for contributing their expertise to public life.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez
Via website: https://escribeapresidente.presidencia.gob.es/formulario

November 30, 2018

Prime Minister Sánchez:

We write to express grave concern regarding the Spanish government’s decision to prosecute political scientists and jurists who were appointed to the Electoral Commission by the Parliament of Catalonia to monitor the referendum for independence. We urge you to drop these charges immediately.

The American Political Science Association is a scholarly association that represents more than 11,000 U.S. and internationally based professors and students of political science, including scholars from Spain. We understand from our colleagues and news reports that election monitors were forced to resign from the commission prior to the referendum and would have faced steep fines had they remained in their posts. Although the election monitors did resign prior to the referendum, the Spanish government is now prosecuting the political scientists and jurists for alleged crimes of “disobedience” and “usurpation of functions” for accepting appointments to the Electoral Commission.

Levying criminal charges against impartial election observers severely undermines the Spanish government’s commitment to democratic processes and the rule of law as well as free expression. It also violates the freedom of political scientists and all scholars to meaningfully engage with the institutions, processes, and people they study. We strongly urge the Spanish government to end the intimidation of these scholars and to drop the charges immediately.

Sincerely,