

## **INTERNATIONAL ELECTION EXPERT RESEARCH TEAM - PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON CATALONIA REFERENDUM**

Helena Catt, head of the International Election Expert Research Team said:

"Yesterday I led a team of seventeen accredited observers who visited over 100 polling stations across Catalonia. This team has decades of experience carrying out over 300 election monitoring assignments all over the world. We monitored and recorded the situation from 5am until polls closed at 8pm and then as ballots were counted.

"When our team of international election experts arrived in Catalonia last month we promised to impartially record and report what we witnessed, warts and all. Undistorted and unvarnished. That's what I intend to provide now in this preliminary statement and in our final report at the end of the week.

"Yesterday we witnessed events that no election monitors ought to ever witness. We hope to never witness scenes of this nature ever again. We saw numerous and repeated violations of civil and human rights. We are shocked that this happened at all.

"Even more so as it is clear to us that it was a centrally orchestrated, military-style operation carefully planned. We are stunned that armed masked officers entered polling stations with the purposes of preventing a peaceful democratic process.

"Despite these issues, and other difficulties people experienced trying to vote, I want to emphasise that we did see a day of voting yesterday.

"We wish to acknowledge the peaceful nature of how the Catalan people acted yesterday. We witnessed many acts demonstrating the strong will of the people which showed that they were determined to have their say and let others have their say through the ballot box, including the elderly and disabled.

"In the face of external interference there were improvisations and last minutes changes to the voting process that were not always consistent across Catalonia or with what was in the law or the manual and we will detail these in our final report.

"We repeatedly saw that those who worked in the polling stations did so in good faith, and we saw no sign of attempts to manipulate the vote. Everyone we saw was doing the best they could under difficult circumstance.

"In conclusion, across Catalonia we noted persistence in the effort to vote including significant turnout despite enormous obstacle and fear. The process should be respected.

"Finally, I would like to thank all the members of our team."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Dr Helena Catt is an academic and election expert. After graduating from the University of Edinburgh and gaining a PhD at LSE, Helena spent over a decade at Auckland University as Associate Dean. Helena has worked in a number of democracy and election specialist roles in Bangladesh, Tonga, Nepal and across the Asia and Pacific region, including five years as the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Electoral Commission. Her published works include *Voting Behaviour: A Radical Critique* (1996) and *Voter's Choice: Electoral Change in New Zealand?* (1992) and *Democracy in Practice* (1999)

The International Electoral Expert Research Team (IEERT) are an informal group of researchers, academics and election experts from New Zealand, Canada, UK and Ireland who have previously taken part in traditional observation missions and elections in different parts of the world.

The core IEERT team are being assisted by twelve short term researchers from Poland, United States, Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Finland and Hungary who were on the ground in the days ahead of the vote.

The IEERT will produce a preliminary statement within 24hours of the vote on 1st October, and publish a final report within 10 days of the vote.

IEERT intend to analyse the political environment and media landscape, the legal framework, the electoral process and the voters' registration process including assessing their compliance with international standards and national and regional legislation.

The IEERT have signed a pledge to adhere fully to the principles of independence, neutrality, and impartiality as per the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. IEERT's analysis will be based on sound and established methodologies, process oriented and with no prejudice shown towards or against any electoral result of the referendum.

For further information please contact the IEERT at [ieert2017@gmail.com](mailto:ieert2017@gmail.com)