



**EUROMIL aisbl**

*(European Organisation of  
Military Associations)*

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## **Statement of EUROMIL at the 117<sup>th</sup> Presidium Meeting** **Brussels, 20-21 April 2018**

*The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 34 military associations and trade unions from 23 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.*

The member associations of EUROMIL at their meeting in Brussels in the context of the 117<sup>th</sup> Presidium have been informed of the last administrative procedure launched against Corporal Teresa Franco, Secretary for Women of the "United Association of Spanish Military" (AUME), and is particularly concerned about the succession of detentions, disciplinary proceedings and other intimidating and repressive measures taken against representatives of military associations in the last years in Spain.

The member associations represented at the 117<sup>th</sup> EUROMIL Presidium Meeting underline that the right to freedom of association and associated rights such as the right to freedom of expression are intrinsic to democratic societies and expressly recognized in all major international and regional human rights instruments.

Despite some positive developments in the recognition of servicemen and – women rights in Spain, such as the adoption, in 2011, of the Law on Rights and Duties for the Members of the Armed Forces, establishing the right of association for military personnel, restrictions of their fundamental rights remain high.

Since AUME was founded in 2005, its representatives faced constant pressure from the military authorities in different ways: downward reports affecting their professional situation, delays in promotions, or even disciplinary measures and detention.



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For years, Teresa Franco has been promoting and defending equality for women in the Spanish armed forces. It is unfortunately not the first time that EUROMIL's Presidium learns about repressive measures taken against her and already denounced the attacks she faced in 2013. Among others, she was several times deprived of her liberty for matters related to freedom of expression and associative work.

Today, the Presidium learned that the Spanish armed forces have again opened a case against Teresa Franco to expel her from the air force for not having succeeded in her compulsory evaluation tests in the last 3 years. Terminating her contract would thus be justified by a loss of professional ability coupled with a lack of respect for neutrality. Moreover, it learned the case Teresa Franco filed a few years ago concerning the harassment she was victim of at her workplace, was reopened.

The EUROMIL Presidium is of the opinion that the current situation of Teresa Franco is linked to her recent public denunciation of the harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination faced by women in the Spanish armed forces as well as her engagement as a representative of the military association AUME.

The Presidium thinks that the recent case opened against Teresa Franco is no coincidence and that the administrative procedure launched against her can be interpreted as a crackdown on associative work, civil society and human rights defenders.

In view of the multiples cases of restrictions to the fundamental rights and freedoms of military personnel in Spain brought to the attention of EUROMIL in recent years, EUROMIL's Presidium also believes that the case of Teresa Franco could be described as an attempt by the Spanish authorities to limit freedom of expression, opinion and political views in the armed forces.

EUROMIL and its member associations regrets that Spain continues to impose undue restrictions on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of military personnel and strongly condemns the current repressive measures taken against Teresa Franco.

EUROMIL's Presidium recalls that in a democratic society, the relationship among political and military authorities and professional military associations should be based on mutual trust and respect.

The Presidium highlights that progress towards democratic armed forces also includes the adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming, equality, non-discrimination and inclusion policies in the armed forces.



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Therefore, EUROMIL's 117th Presidium calls on the Spanish political and military authorities:

- to immediately stop all disciplinary or legal measures against members of military associations in Spain, including against Teresa Franco;
- to stop the harassment and "witch hunt" against the leadership of AUME and other military associations;
- to respect the fundamental rights of Teresa Franco, her colleagues, and those who are represented by military associations;
- to ensure equal rights, treatment and opportunities for all in the armed forces;
- to particularly ensure that the rights to freedom of association, freedom of expression and associated rights are fully exercised by military personnel, both in legislation and in practice.
- to improve the relationship between independent military associations and the political and military leadership and establish a well-organised social dialogue;
- to support the present request and ensure that all Spanish military personnel will be treated as "Citizens in Uniform" in the future.

On behalf of the 117<sup>th</sup> EUROMIL Presidium.

Emmanuel Jacob  
President