



Spanish Protest New Curbs on Freedom of Speech and Assembly

On Sunday, April 12, angry Spanish protesters staged one of the world's first "virtual demonstrations," a hologram display of hundreds of people marching, chanting, and waving placards produced in front of Spain's Congress of Deputies. The futuristic demonstration made a plangent point: In less than three months, most real flesh and blood demonstrations will become illegal in Spain, as part of a series of draconian new curbs on freedom of speech, assembly, and the redress of grievances against the Spanish government contained in Spain's new Citizen Safety Law, contemptuously nicknamed the "Ley Mordaza" or gag law.



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Enacted by Spain's governing Popular Party in response to unrest over economic instability and the threat of terrorism, the Spanish equivalent of the American Patriot Act will curtail Spanish rights even more than American anti-terror legislation. Among many other things, the law, if enacted, will:

- Make it illegal to gather in front of government buildings without permission from the government. Those who organize unauthorized protests can be fined up to €60,000.
- Make it illegal to film or photograph police officers, thereby removing a critical check against police abuse (for which Spain's quasi-military national police force, the Guardia Civil, have a long and checkered history). Violators can be fined up to €30,000.
- Criminalize "disrespecting" police officers in any way, with fines of up to €600.
- Shift the authority for levying fines and punishments for alleged public order related offenses from the Spanish courts to government agencies, guaranteeing that law officers' versions of events will be assumed to be correct.

Besides these, a welter of other changes to the Spanish code of law are in the offing, changes that would broaden beyond recognition the definition for various types of crimes — including the real-world version of Orwellian "thought crimes" such as making statements on social media that could be "perceived" as inciting others to take violent action, even if nothing happens in response.

For all intents and purposes, public (and some private) protests against Spain's government will be outlawed later this year, as Spain follows America's example in rolling back significant amounts of personal liberty in response to panic over the economy and terrorism. And as with the Patriot Act, Spain's rulers, determined to ensure their own survival at any cost, appear indifferent to the public outcry.

Warned an organizer of Spain's "hologram protest," "With the restrictions we're suffering on our



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on April 14, 2015

freedoms of association and peaceful assembly, the last options that will be left to use in the end will be to protest through our holograms.”

Until they, too, are outlawed.



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