

WORLD UNIVERSITY LECTURERS MANIFESTO IN FAVOUR OF THE RECOGNITION AND DIGNITY OF ARAGON'S MINORITY LANGUAGES

*It's like a bird losing feathers.
You see one float by, and there it goes,
another word gone.*

Johnny Hill, Jr., of Parker, Arizona,
one of the last speakers of "Chemehuevi"

Every two weeks a language dies. It is possible that by the end of the century about half of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken in the world today will have disappeared as communities abandon their vernacular languages for the majority ones.

Aragonés is included in Unesco's Atlas of World's Languages in Danger (2010) as one of those faced with this situation, and possibly one of the European Union languages with the worst prospects for future preservation. Catalan spoken in Aragon is also suffering a clear regression and 'Castilianisation' as a result of the absence of adequate instruments for its normalisation.

There are 100,000 people in total (7% of the total population of Aragon) who speak one of these two minority languages, an intangible heritage for all of humanity, whose preservation is the responsibility of everyone, especially governments.

In 2009 the Cortes de Aragón approved a law on the use, protection and promotion of these languages which recognised the existence of both Aragonés and Catalan and guaranteed their learning (voluntary) and teaching in formal education and certain rights of their speakers, amongst them, to address and be answered by the Administration (in certain cases) in their respective languages. This law has never been applied.

The current Government of Aragon, ignoring international guidelines (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages), state guidelines (Spanish Constitution 1978) and its own Statute of Autonomy, intends to overturn the 2009 law, approve a regulation that denies the existence both of Aragonés and of Catalan and condemn these two languages (both with an important literary legacy and an interesting creative present) to invisibility and disappearance in the medium term.

It is for this reason, that the signatories of the manifesto, members of the scientific community, show their support for the express recognition of Aragonés and Catalan spoken in Aragon, as well as the rights of their speakers to the normal public development of both languages in accordance with international legality on this matter and on equal terms with the rest of the languages of Spain, Europe and the world.