

Press release: Defamation of CREA and its members since we broke the silence on the sexual harassment in universities.

In this press release participated Marta Soler, on behalf of the research community CREA, Mar Joanpere, in the name of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence in Universities, Montserrat Vilà and Albert Ramentol, lawyer of the office Albert Advocats. Also, Oriol Ríos, researcher at MEDIS-URV and member of CREA, and Julio Vargas, ex-member of CREA were present.

We stated that since 2004 when we broke the silence on sexual harassment in universities and since we developed the pioneer research in Spain on Gender Violence in Spanish and Catalan Universities, we have received constant and systemic anonymous attacks and defamations by those people who attempt to keep the silence on sexual harassment in universities. This is affecting our personal and professional lives. Promoted by this lobby, slander about us has been anonymously disseminated for twelve years now. This slander is used anonymously by other people who for a variety of reasons such as envy on a professional level take a stance against CREA. On the one hand, there is false information that has not been contrasted with the existing evidences. For instance, the false information that in 2005 the University of Barcelona requested the Director of CREA to resign is clearly refutable with the certified letter sent on 27 January 2005 from the Rector Joan Tugores requesting the former Director of CREA to “act as a director”. Only on 1 September 2006, after the passing away of one of the members of CREA who had taken a stance against gender violence, the former Director of CREA requested his resignation to the Rector Marius Rubiralta, which was accepted by the rectorate on 12 December 2006. On the other hand, we receive constant attacks on the dignity of the members of CREA.

All these defamations have systematically increased with every step forward in this struggle. Especially now the University of Barcelona is deciding on the possibility to reincorporate in the teaching activities a full professor who has already been investigated for alleged sexual harassment in the university. Due to these considerations, the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence in Universities together with the Students’ Assemblies of the University of Barcelona have decided to start a campaign that claims to avoid this reincorporation and at the same time denounces and evidences one of the black holes in the universities of our country: impunity of sexual harassment. In less than a week this campaign has gathered the support of more than thousand people and additionally of a dozen collectives that evidence that the solidarity and the stance against the silence in our Faculties is getting stronger.

Moreover, CREA and its struggle and research on sexual harassment in universities has already gained the support of both national and international entities as well as renowned academics and professionals on the international sphere, such as the European Women’s Lobby

Observatory, or the Office for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response at Harvard University. Precisely, the former Head of the Office for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response publicly stated that “the efforts of CREA to establish the basis to break the silence on gender violence are inspiring. Future generations of students and faculty, without doubt, will have a very different experience due to their work.” We also gained the support of Congress of Deputies, which decided to introduce, for the first time, the obligation of all Spanish universities to have Equality Committees in the Law for Equality of 2007.

On the other, Montserrat Vilà states the support received by CREA in the development of their task of reporting and preventing Gender Violence as the President of the Unitary Platform

against Gender Violence, a platform constituted by more than 100 social entities of Catalonia. She states that taking a stance against gender violence always has consequences and therefore it is necessary to support victims and those who defend them and stand in solidarity.

The lawyer informs that all these facts are in the hands of justice to defend ourselves following the appropriate legal channels and that the origins of the anonymous defamations in the internet are investigated by the police.

In spite of the attacks and the resistances to create universities free of sexual violence they did not stop us and they will not stop us. **We are aware that taking a stance against gender violence has consequences but CREA will continue denouncing the impunity of sexual harassment in our universities.**

CREA, *Community of Research on Excellence for All*
Barcelona, 13 de junio de 2016