

Dear Ms Burnside,

Thank you for contacting me on this situation faced by you and other expatriate homeowners in Spain.

These ongoing cases are extremely concerning and I and other Labour colleagues have been aware of them for a number of years. A huge number of petitions have been brought to the European Parliament on the issue, and debated principally with the Petitions Committee. I know my colleague Michael Cashman has been particularly active as a member of this committee.

Unfortunately as private property rights are a matter for Member State governments and not of direct EU responsibility, the European Commission is not able to act directly against the Spanish authorities. As such with regards to the legal situation in particular I am unable to advise you and for this you would need to take expert legal advice or get an organisation to prepare a court case.

What we can do however is apply political pressure in the European Parliament, and ensure that the European Commission does the same. Through working with the previous Spanish Socialist government, this led to the idea of a special committee of enquiry to be set up to examine cases where people had in good faith purchased "illegal" builds. However, it is regrettable that the new right-wing Government has scrapped this idea, and we are back to square one.

Be assured that I and Labour colleagues will keep up the pressure on the relevant authorities in Spain and will make sure that the issue does not fall off the agenda and is raised at any possible occasion.

If you have details of where I can send a letter to raise concerns, please send me it. There is no guarantee of action, but it does sometimes help to know decisions are under outside scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,
Linda McAvan
Labour MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber