

Letter addressed to Ms. Ursula von der Leyen from the undersigned DANA victims' associations

Most Honorable Ms. Ursula von der Leyen,

President of the European Commission and leader of the European People's Party,

On the occasion of your visit to Valencia during the European People's Party Congress, we—the families affected by the DANA of October 29, 2024—are reaching out to you.

We write from a place of deep pain, as victims, as grieving families, but above all, as European citizens. On that day, torrential rains devastated our region. Yet it must be made clear: the lives lost and the injuries sustained were not only the result of the DANA itself, but also of the negligence in how it was managed. Prevention failed. Coordination failed. Early warning systems failed. We are no longer in the 19th century—both the technical and human resources exist, but they were neither activated in time nor used as they should have been. The consequences were devastating: 228 people lost their lives, hundreds more were injured, and society was left in shock. We watched helplessly as homes, cars, neighbors, and loved ones were swept away by floodwaters. No one warned us that the river was rising. Many things failed that day. And they continued to fail in the days that followed, when only a legion of volunteers stepped up to help. No one has taken responsibility. Institutions failed us, and many families were left completely abandoned. Some of us did not even know the fate of our loved ones for days—while, at the same time, our government seemed more concerned with photo opportunities.

The silence from the institutions that followed only deepened the wound. Instead of answers, we received evasions. The President of the Generalitat Valenciana, Carlos Mazón, has provided no convincing explanations, nor has he acknowledged any mistakes. Even now, we do not know where he was during those critical hours while our friends and family members were drowning. He has not even had the decency to meet with the bereaved or look them in the eye. It bears repeating that Mr. Mazón's regional government held—and still holds—full authority over prevention and emergency management in such situations.

What's more, the regional government has yet to recognize the victims in any meaningful way: no official gestures of condolence, no reparations, no compensation, and no direct assistance to the families affected. This is the extent of the contempt shown by Mr. Mazón's administration and his political allies, both in the national Popular Party and Vox. He has gone into hiding, forced other officials to resign to avoid accountability, and attempted to carry on as if nothing happened. But we believe that the most basic duty of any public servant is to attend to the suffering of citizens—to listen, to act, and to face reality. It is unacceptable to deny responsibility, let alone attempt to lecture the public on climate change after such a disaster. We do not deserve such disregard.

It is for this reason that we now address you—not only as President of the European Commission, but also as leader of the European People’s Party. The institution you lead is tasked with safeguarding the welfare and lives of all European citizens. Moreover, you have been one of the driving forces behind the European Green Deal, which rightly identifies the climate crisis as a human crisis. For these reasons, we recognize your special authority and responsibility.

We firmly believe that not all politicians are the same—and that you can represent a different kind of leadership. The European Commission must watch over all citizens, regardless of where they live or which party governs them. This dual role grants you significant moral authority in these challenging times, but it also imposes a duty to act. You cannot look the other way when regional governments deny the climate crisis and, in doing so, neglect to take the steps necessary to prevent and respond to disasters like the one we endured. Let us also remind you that in the six months since the tragedy, no representative of the European Commission—neither yourself nor any commissioner—has visited the affected area. And yet you now come to Valencia for a party congress.

We, the victims, are asking for justice. We seek not only recognition and reparation for what we have suffered, but also the help we need to move forward and prevent this from ever happening again. We do not want to live in fear every time it rains, wondering whether our leaders will fail us once more. What happened to us must not happen again—neither here nor anywhere else. Since our local and regional governments have abandoned us, we appeal to you and the European Commission to rise to this moment.

Our aim is not only to present specific demands, but also to help you understand the full reality of what we, the families of the victims, have experienced. We want you to hear directly from us—how we lived through the catastrophe and what its consequences are to this day. Therefore, we respectfully request a meeting during your stay in Valencia, where we can share our testimonies, our grief, and our expectations for what the European Union—and you as its leader—can do in response.

Specifically, we wish to present the following proposals:

1. **Streamlined and direct aid from the European Union**, as many families still lack the resources to rebuild their homes, businesses, or life projects months after the disaster. We also ask for support so that public administrations can rebuild critical infrastructure and better prepare the region for future floods.
2. **A firm stance from the European Commission against climate denialism** among regional governments—particularly those aligned with parties that downplay or reject the climate emergency. The European Green Deal must not be reduced to a symbolic gesture; it must be a red line that cannot be crossed. Lives are at stake.
3. **European oversight of climate and safety commitments**, ensuring that all regional and national administrations comply with EU standards on risk prevention,

infrastructure maintenance, and emergency management.

4. **A clear and public condemnation, as leader of the European People's Party, of the negligent and denialist actions of Mr. Mazón**, and a call for Mr. Alberto Núñez Feijóo to replace him as head of the party in the Valencian Community and as President of the Generalitat.

We trust that you, as President of the Commission and as leader of your political family, will uphold the core values of the European Union: the protection of life, collective safety, and human dignity.

In the hope of finding in you a true ally, we emphasize how vital it is for us to be heard. We look to you to lead a genuine shift in Europe's approach to these crises. We hope to meet with you soon and to share our experiences in person.

With sincere respect,

Associació Víctimes Mortals DANA 29-O

Associació Víctimes 29 d'octubre