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INTERVIEW

Jordi Fernández

FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE RED CROSS

«I don't believe in coincidences, and even less when everything happens fifteen days before the elections»

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Jordi Fernández has been linked to the Andorran Red Cross for almost three decades, first as a volunteer and, since 2009, as director of the entity. This Monday, and less than two months before the internal elections, the Board dismissed him from his position through a non-causal dismissal. The decision has generated surprise and controversy within the organization, especially due to the timing of the decision and the lack of public explanations.

—How do you assess everything that has happened in recent days?

—The first thing I would like to highlight is that there was a reality: the difficulty of working in a board with which there was increasing distance. This was no surprise. However, there is a point of surprise in how things have been done, especially due to the haste with which they have acted.

We are less than a month and a half away from the elections, in which there are two candidacies, and the fact that a decision like this is being made at this very moment seems hasty to me. If one of the candidacies wanted to hire me again, they wouldn't be able to do so now.

—So, you think it wasn't the right time to take this step?

—Exactly. If a candidacy wins and has already decided that it doesn't want to hire me, then yes, it would make sense. But doing it before the elections, when the decision could be unsustainable, doesn't seem coherent to me. Even more so when this involves paying compensation with money from the partners. If it later turns out that I am hired again, how can this be explained?

—There has been a lot of talk about the legal procedure used to make your departure effective.

—Yes, they accepted a non-cau-



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«I have not been fired for being incompetent, but because I have lost someone's trust»

sal dismissal, as provided for by labor legislation, which involves paying the corresponding compensation and not having to give an explanation. But, if that is the case, why is a story then constructed to justify the decision? Why is there an attempt to justify it, if it is not legally necessary?

—Issues such as your qualifications or budgetary deviations have been put on the table.

—I think that the most transparent way to have acted would have been to simply say that the director must be a person trusted by the Board, and that in this ca-

se I was no longer so. And that is it. This is a clear and honest explanation. But going into justifications about qualifications or other issues generates confusion. And regarding qualifications, if you allow me, I would like to show you a document.

—Go ahead.

—This is a letter from the Government in which, curiously, my resignation as director is requested. What surprises me is that, in the authorizations to open the socio-health centers issued by the Government itself, my name does not appear as director, but that of a qualified person, as required by the regulations. In other words, the Executive says that I do not meet the qualifications but authorizes the opening of four centers during my directorship. Isn't there a contradiction here? However, I repeat that in the end the Government can write one, but it is my Board that fires me. We must also understand the position of the two entities.

—Could it lead to the idea that the

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qualifications were just an excuse and that there are other reasons behind it?

—It could be. Obviously, I can only speculate, because I do not have documentation on other reasons. But I think there is a clear divergence in the vision of how the Red Cross should be run.

—What exactly are you referring to?

—The Red Cross is not a private company. When I joined as director there were 11 employees; now there are 82. It is true that the entity has grown and that a more professional structure is needed, with human resources, accounting... but the objective remains humanitarian and social. Some have a more business-like vision, and this creates differences.

—Does this more business-like vision come from specific figures?

—Yes, I think that above all there is a difference of opinion between the president and other members such as the vice president. The president, Josep Pol, with whom I have a good relationship, made some very positive statements about my work at a recent event. On the other hand, the vice president made much more negative comments. This reflects the internal division.

—And with a view to the elections on May 13th?



«I believe in the Red Cross, but I do not believe in the people who want to lead it after the elections»

«If a candidacy wins and wants to count on me, it can no longer because they have proceeded to liquidate me»

—The current president cannot run again by statute, and this leaves a void. Those who take over are people from the private sector, with a different way of seeing things. I also come from the private sector, I have worked in banking for many years, and I am not saying that this is bad. But leading the Red Cross as if it were a private company is the problem. The objective is not to make money, but to help people.

—I am a little lost here. What role has the Government played in all this?

—I think you have touched on a key point. Why should the Executive interfere in the organizatio-



nal and operational structure of an entity? The Government must comply with the law and regulations, and that's it. I think someone has gone too far here. If I were the one who signed that letter, I would feel and uncomfortable. It is not up to the Government to say whether or not Jordi Fernández should be dismissed. This is an internal decision of the entity. And the feeling I have is that they wanted to find an excuse, a justification for making a decision that had already been decided.

—Has there been interventionism?

—I think so. It is one thing for the Government to want to influence or interfere in who should be the general director, but the final decision is the Board's. If they had not changed me, it would have been the Board that would have decided. And this is where I think they did not want to look for a

solution or defend a position. The easy option, or perhaps the already planned one, was to dismiss me with the members' money, kick me out.

—You will allow the question... I do not know if you believe in coincidences or not, but the news comes out exactly a week before the inauguration of the Centre de les Valls del Nord.

—That is a very good question [laughs]. In addition, the letter we are talking about is also very good. They tell me that in 2021 there was a three-year extension, and that this extension ended in September 2024. This, according to the Government's explanations, but on the other hand the letter is from March 17th, right when there are elections, and it coincides with two candidacies. And, obviously, I was closer to the second candidacy. ●

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