

### Country of origin

Spain

### Name of the proposed action

*Who pays is the one who rules: civil obedience action*

### Name of the organization, group or network proposing the action

Aigua és vida (Water is Life, in Catalan)

### Organization's website

<http://aiguaesvida.wordpress.com/>

### Description and motive for the action

Barcelona citizens find themselves utterly defenseless before a public and basic service, as may be Water. Hence, and backed up by a judgment dated October 2010, “the price that the Societat General d’Aigües de Barcelona, AGBAR (the name of the public company offering watering service in Barcelona) charges for the service rendered to the citizens of Barcelona is illegal”, as “there is no tender agreement signed”. It adds that “we are facing a null tender due to the lack of all eligible previous procedures”, which implies “relevant material repercussions, as the management of the water supply service in the city of Barcelona and the performance of SGAB (currently AGBAR) in its quality of permit holder of said service are considered unlawful”. Thus, the price of the bill referring to the amount charged to the citizens of Barcelona for the service rendered “is unlawful” and so, these installments must be cancelled, as well as the VAT thereof.

This action aims to be an example for other cities in the world to take the same actions one by one, following the experience in Barcelona. We are facing a situation of privatization of the public water supply and sanitation services, especially in Greece, Portugal and Italy, despite the examples of successful public services, such as the one in the Netherlands.

This action seeks to open a first door for all active citizens in the defense of water and basic related services outside the logic of the market. The ACT! will be the engine to build alternatives and to resist to privatization, as well as to build water and sanitation public services with social participation and under social control, where the real runners and controllers of this public service were the public.

Given this alarming situation it has been a year since the Platform Aigua és Vida started denouncing the deregulation of water, the impunity and the

lack of control over AGBAR's actions and the social plundering that reification of water means to all citizens.

We must also remember the devastating impact that AGBAR (subsidiary of the French multinational SUEZ) provoked to the Southern countries and the strong social opposition upon its arrival to Latin America: expulsion from Buenos Aires, Santa Fe province, Cordoba city in Argentina, from La Paz – High Bolivia and East Maldonado in Uruguay. Not to forget the water war in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and the constitutional processes in Uruguay, Ecuador and Bolivia, where the Human Right to water linked to a public and participative management is recognized. Further information on this failure in Latin America can be found in the work “Drowning: Rising and fall of multinational companies in South America” (original title -Spanish-: “Con el agua al cuello: Ascenso y Caída de las multinacionales en sudamérica”)

([http://admin.isf.es/UserFiles/File/catalunya/publicaciones/castellano/ESFeres3def\\_conISBN\\_web.pdf](http://admin.isf.es/UserFiles/File/catalunya/publicaciones/castellano/ESFeres3def_conISBN_web.pdf)).

On the other hand, we must remember the serious impact of watering multinational companies in Africa (Mali, South Africa, Gambia, Tanzania, Malawi or Ghana) and Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia or Philippines). The work “Mirage on the Water” (original title -Spanish-: “Espejismo en el agua”) is at your disposal at: ([http://www.blueplanetproject.net/espanol/documents/Espejismo\\_en\\_el\\_agua.pdf](http://www.blueplanetproject.net/espanol/documents/Espejismo_en_el_agua.pdf)).

All conflicts within the Spanish territory can be found in the work “Water, as life, is not a good merchandise” (original title: El agua como la vida, no es una mercancía) ([http://www.catalunya.isf.es/menu\\_publicaciones/El-agua-como-la-vida-no-es-una-mercancia.pdf](http://www.catalunya.isf.es/menu_publicaciones/El-agua-como-la-vida-no-es-una-mercancia.pdf)), as well as a summary of all struggles around Europe (Constitutional referendum in Italy, Berlin referendum, the turning back to local administration of water in Paris, the campaign against its privatization in Portugal or the change into watering social management in Greece).

Given the serious impacts that privatization of watering public services is implying worldwide, both at the North and at the South, and the situation that we are living in Catalonia, we decided to focus in one of the main watering multinationals, this is AGBAR-SUEZ, in order to achieve a changing action. Therefore, we **propose to start a campaign relying on the refusal of paying the unlawful charge to AGBAR**. Due to the aforementioned judgment, we call it “civil obedience” and not “civil disobedience”.

All 8.000€ derived from ACT!2012 would be dedicated to three basic activities:

1. Process map of the alternative charging of the fee
2. Diffusion campaign and information on the proposal
3. Legal advice

#### Specific result expected from the action

Recovery of public services, which politicians assigned to the private market unlawfully and without appearing in any election program, in order to bring them back to the citizenship.

Bringing back to public local management the watering service in Barcelona.

Arising to debate the need of having watering and sanitary service managed in full by the public system.

#### Kind of action

Civil disobedience

#### Citizenship participation

As it has been introduced, citizenship is the main actor. Although there is a quite important activity on popular education, collective thinking and citizenship empowering, there is a need for citizens to step forward and participate in the “civil obedience campaign”, this is, **paying the fee directly to the Ajuntament de Barcelona instead of paying it to AGBAR.**

#### Term / Agenda

Autumn 2012

#### Organizations that could become collaborators

Local, social, syndical, ecologic, supportive or academic institutions and social movements. The platform of Aigua és Vida is already a multi-sector and multidisciplinary platform.

In an international level, it is closely coordinated with multi-sector networks as Reclaiming Public Water, Water Justice Movement, European Watering Network, Red Agua Pública, Red Vida.