

Two Royal Mandates of Joan I Concerning Criminal Prosecution in the Kingdom of Valencia (1387)

Source: ACA, Cancillería, f. 27r (two letters on a single folio) **Language:** Catalan **Date:** [25?] [March? October?] 1387 **Document type:** Administrative mandates (*manaments*) **Principal actors:** Joan I, King of Aragon; the portantveus de Governador in the Kingdom of Valencia; an unnamed recipient (Document 1); en Julià Garcés/Garriga (Document 2)

Summary

These two companion letters form part of a coordinated royal effort to prosecute fugitive criminals in the Kingdom of Valencia early in Joan I's reign. Document 1 orders an unnamed official to assist the portantveus de Governador in pursuing individuals accused of serious crimes who have fled, invoking the king's trust in the recipient's competence. Document 2 is shorter and more directive: it orders the recipient to cooperate vigorously with a named royal agent, en Julià Garcés (or Garriga), who will convey specific instructions on behalf of the crown. Both letters bear the same date and were dispatched together.

Reconciled Transcription

Document 1

Lo Rey

Sapiats que·l portantveus de Governador en Regne de Valencia per manament nostre segueix contra alguns homens del dit Regne delats de molts e diuerses crims per los quals se son absentats. E car los [crims?] de que se inculpan sien cruels e tals que per lurs merits se deuria fer justícia rigurosa consequencio per ço volem e us manam que en anotar lo particular de nostre physich [?] e altres coses d'aquell dependents enenats [?] diligentment per la nostra cort. Car nos qui confiam de vostra abtesa [?] e bona diligencia vos farem plenament part [?] de nostres novelles [?]. Dada per nostre segell secret [?] en Barch[inon]a [?] a xxv [?] dies de [Març? octubre?] en l'any de la nativitat de nostre senyor M CCC LXXX set.

Ffrancesc [?] / Iacob [?]

ffuit missa ——— dominus Rex mandavit michi P. d'Abernes [?]

Document 2

Lo Rey

Ja sabets con lo portantveus de Governador en Regne de Valencia per manament nostre segueix contra alguns homens delats de diuerses e enormes crims per los quals se son absentats. Perque volem es manam expressament que en anotar nostre physich [?] contra tots los dits delats vos haiats curosament e hi obra complidament [?] tot ço que us dirà en Julià Garcés [?] de part nostra, car nos li manarem que la dita rahó. Dada

per nostre segell secret [?] a xxv [?] dies de [Març? octubre?] en l'any de la nativitat de nostre senyor M CCC LXXX set.

Ffrancesc [?] / Iacob [?]

ffuit missa {idem}

Annotated English Translation

Document 1

The King.

Know that the portantveus de Governador¹ in the Kingdom of Valencia, by our mandate, proceeds against certain men of the said Kingdom accused of many and diverse crimes, on account of which [crimes] they have absented themselves.² And because the [crimes?] of which they are accused are cruel and such that by their merits rigorous justice ought to be done — consequently, therefore we wish and command you that in assisting the agent³ of our physich⁴ and other matters dependent thereon, you should act [?] diligently on behalf of our court. For we, who trust in your ability⁵ and good diligence, shall fully inform you [?] of our news [?].⁶ Given under our secret seal [?],⁷ in Barcelona [?], on the 25th [?] day of [March? October?],⁸ in the year of the nativity of our Lord 1387.

Ffrancesc [?] / Iacob [?]⁹

It was sent ——— the lord King commanded me, P. d'Abernes [?]¹⁰

Document 2

The King.

You already know that the portantveus de Governador in the Kingdom of Valencia, by our mandate, proceeds against certain men accused of diverse and enormous crimes, on account of which they have absented themselves. Therefore we wish and expressly command you that, in assisting our physich [?],⁴ against all the said accused you should conduct yourselves diligently¹¹ and by deed fulfill everything that en Julià Garcés [?]¹² will tell you on our behalf, for we shall command him regarding the said matter. Given under our secret seal [?], on the 25th [?] day of [March? October?], in the year of the nativity of our Lord 1387.

Ffrancesc [?] / Iacob [?]

It was sent {idem}¹³

Footnotes

Unresolved Ambiguities

1. **"Physich / physich"**: The central interpretive crux. Does this mean "physician" (literal), "fiscal officer" (contextual emendation), or something else entirely? The *ph-* spelling appears deliberate and consistent across both documents, but the role of a physician in criminal prosecution mandates is unexplained. If it does mean physician, the documents may concern a more specific situation than a general criminal sweep — perhaps one involving forensic examination or suspicious deaths.
 2. **The date: day and month.** The year 1387 is secure. The day is probably xxv but could be xv. The month is unresolved: March and October are both plausible. Cross-referencing with adjacent folios in the register should settle this.
 3. **"Lo particular de nostre physich" (Doc 1)**: Even accepting *physich*, the syntactic relationship between *particular* and *physich* is unclear. Is *particular* a noun (agent/deputy) or an adjective modifying an implied noun?
 4. **"Vos farem plenament part [?] de nostres novelles [?]" (Doc 1 closing)**: Individual word readings remain tentative. The formula is recognizable in outline but not securely transcribed in detail.
 5. **"Enenats [?] diligentment" (Doc 1)**: The verb governing the recipient's obligation in the central clause of Document 1 is still not securely read. The sense requires something like "you should act/proceed diligently," but the exact form is uncertain.
 6. **Surname of en Julià (Doc 2)**: Garcés or Garriga — both defensible, neither confirmed.
 7. **Surname of the chancery scribe**: "P. d'Abernes [?]" — the surname is not legible with confidence.
 8. **Place of issue (Doc 1)**: I tentatively read *en Barchinona* but the toponym is not clearly legible. Document 2 omits a place name entirely, which is unusual if both were issued simultaneously.
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1. The *portantveus de Governador* ("bearer of the voice of the Governor") was the lieutenant or deputy of the Governor General in each of the constituent kingdoms of the Crown of Aragon. In Valencia, this official exercised broad judicial and executive authority. ↩
 2. "Se son absentats" — i.e., they have fled the jurisdiction to avoid prosecution. The pursuit of fugitive criminals (*absentats*) is a recurring concern in Joan I's early administrative correspondence. ↩
 3. "Lo particular" — tentatively translated as "the agent" or "the deputy." The exact sense of *particular* here is uncertain. It could refer to a specific subordinate or designated representative acting in a defined capacity. The phrase *lo particular de nostre physich* is syntactically difficult; see footnote 4. ↩

4. "Physich / physich" — this is the most puzzling term in both documents. The word appears twice (once per letter) and is consistently spelled with *ph-*. In medieval Catalan, *fisic* or *phísic* ordinarily means "physician" (*medicus*). However, a physician makes little obvious sense in the context of criminal prosecution, unless the crown is dispatching a medical officer to examine evidence or injuries. An alternative possibility is that this is a variant or scribal error for *fisc* (the royal fisc/treasury) or *fiscal* (fiscal officer/prosecutor), which would fit the legal context naturally — but the *ph-* spelling and the apparent vowel structure do not straightforwardly support that reading. This remains an unresolved crux requiring further archival or prosopographical investigation. ↩ ↩²
5. "Abtesa" — likely a variant of *aptesa* (aptitude, ability), with common medieval voicing of the intervocalic stop. ↩
6. "Vos farem plenament part [?] de nostres novelles [?]" — the formula is uncertain in its precise wording but the sense appears to be a closing assurance: "we shall keep you fully informed of our news/affairs." The words *part* and *novelles* are both tentative readings. Other Aragonese royal letters employ similar closing formulae. ↩
7. "Segell secret" — the reading of *secret* vs. *petit* after *segell* is not fully secure from the ms. The secret seal (*segell secret*) was used for correspondence that was more personal or politically sensitive, as distinct from the great seal (*segell major*) used for solemn public acts. Its use here would be consistent with an administrative mandate of moderate formality. ↩
8. The day and month of the date formula remain uncertain. The numeral appears to be *xxv* (25) rather than *xv* (15), but this is not fully secure. The month could be *Març* (March) or another month; the HTR reads March while I initially read October. Both are plausible for Joan I's early reign — he acceded to the throne in January 1387. Archival cross-referencing with the register's surrounding folios should resolve this. ↩
9. The signatories *Ffrancesc* and *Iacob* likely refer to chancery officials who witnessed or authenticated the letter. Their full identities are not securely legible. ↩
10. The scribal attribution follows the standard formula: *ffuit missa* ("it was sent"), followed by the *iussio* clause identifying the official who transmitted the royal command. "P. d'Abernes [?]" — the surname is uncertain. This individual served as a chancery scribe or secretary. ↩
11. "Curosament" — "carefully, diligently" (from *curós*, careful/diligent). Jonathan's correction from my earlier readings of *vigorosament* and the HTR's *rigurosament*. ↩
12. "En Julià Garcés [?]" — the first name *Julià* is clear; the surname begins *Gar-* but the ending is ambiguous. My initial reading suggested *Garriga*, while the HTR reads *Garcés*. Both are attested surnames in fourteenth-century Valencia. This individual appears to be a royal agent dispatched to coordinate the prosecution on the ground. Prosopographical research in the ACA registers may clarify his identity. ↩
13. *{idem}* — "the same," referring back to the scribal attribution of Document 1. This confirms both letters were dispatched together by the same chancery scribe. ↩