

Selected Articles: Catalonia's Referendum

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, October 02, 2017



On Catalonia's Referendum

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

Global Research, October 02, 2017

[Moon of Alabama](#) 1 October 2017



Some people in Catalonia, a rich and culturally distinct area in north-east of Spain, [want to secede](#) from the larger country. According to [polls](#) (pdf) less than half of the people in the area support the move. The local government prepared for a referendum and called for a local vote.

Polling stations were set up for today. But Spanish laws do not allow for such polls or a separation. Catalonia, like other Spanish regions, already has a good degree of autonomy. If Catalonia were to secede the Basque areas in the north would likely follow. Spain would fall apart. Under Spanish law the referendum is illegal. The central government sent police to prevent the procedure. Street

melees ensued.

A lot of mistakes have been made by the central government. It was stubborn in negotiations. It reacted too late to – at least partially – reasonable demands. Its insensitivity only incited resistance to it. But it is also responsible for the country as a whole. The behavior of local government is not much better. It is just as conservative, in its own way, as the government in Madrid.

Catalonia has a GDP per capita of some \$33,580/year. For Spain as a whole the GDP per capita is \$26,643/year. Many factors account for the difference. Catalonia has an advantages in climate, in the vicinity of the French border, the high attractiveness for tourists with its capital Barcelona and its beaches. It has a well developed industry. But the “rest of Spain” is also, by far, its biggest market.

A richer part of the country does not want to subsidize the poorer ones. But it still wants to profit from them.

In general the splitting off of sub-states from the bigger, established nations weakens both. It is easier for outside forces to manipulated smaller states than larger ones. While the motives in this or that case are understandable, they are also, in my view, shortsighted.

During the Spanish civil war in the 1930s Catalonia and Basque areas were the last Republican strongholds against the winning right-wing Nationalists. That history lives on in today’s conflict. No one should wish to repeat it.

The original source of this article is [Moon of Alabama](#)

Catalan Voters Face Police State Violence

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, October 02, 2017



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Self-determination is a universal right, affirmed by the UN Charter and other international law – rejected by despotic states like Spain, masquerading as democratic.

On Sunday, Catalans trying to vote in their independence referendum are being assaulted by thuggish police – smashing glass panels of polling stations, bursting in violently, forcibly removing ballot boxes and voters, attacking them with batons and rubber-coated steel bullets, women as violently as men, the elderly treated the same way.

Spain's **Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria** lied, claiming police "acted with professionalism in an appropriate way." Images show otherwise, including women battered and bloodied by police violence.

Catalonia is a battleground in Barcelona and elsewhere. War in the streets rages against its people, trying to exercise their right to vote.

Hundreds so far were injured, including at least 11 police officers. Catalan **President Carles Puigdemont** blasted police state war on the Catalan people, saying:

"The unjustified, disproportionate and irresponsible violence of the Spanish state today has not only failed to stop Catalans' desire to vote...but has helped to clarify all the doubts we had to resolve today."

PM Mariano Rajoy bears full responsibility, operating like a tinpot despot, a modern-day Francisco Franco, Spain's military dictator from the 1930s until 1975.

Thousands assembled pre-dawn ahead of polls opening. People occupied some stations overnight to protect them, ballot boxes brought in during the night, voters urged to resist police tactics nonviolently, some told to hand them flowers.

Ahead of Sunday's vote, police closed 1,300 schools – designated polling stations. Thousands in Barcelona streets chanted "Votarem, votarem" – We will vote, many with their arms raised showing they're nonviolent.

Catalan television broadcast footage of crowds across the autonomous region ahead of the vote. Regional government spokesman **Jordi Turnull** said

"(t)he government today is in a position to affirm that we can celebrate the referendum of self-determination – not as we wanted, but (it will have democratic) guarantees."

Catalans were told ballots can be cast anywhere, including in hospitals and retirement homes by presenting passports or other ID, voters permitted to use printed ballots downloaded from the Internet.

Days earlier, Catalan Mossos d'Esquadra police warned about disrupting order if voters are prevented from casting ballots.

Rajoy's brutal tactics may convince most Spaniards he's unfit to serve. Perhaps his days in office are numbered.

Despite police state violence, voting continues – deterred but determined, a courageous show of nonviolent people power.

Catalan independence from fascist Spain perhaps comes next.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

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Catalonia Independence: Five Things to Think About

Catalan independence can be good or bad - it depends on the Catalan people to make it good, or else it likely will be bad.

By [Tony Cartalucci](#)

Global Research, October 02, 2017



Headlines and commentary across both Eastern and Western media have mainly focused on the Catalan independence referendum and the actions of Spanish police and the Spanish government's attempts to disrupt polls.

However, little is being said about what the real implications of Catalan independence may be. What do those politicians in Catalonia in favor of independence seek to do with it should they succeed? Will they create a Catalonia that serves the best interests of the people? Or serve the EU and NATO more efficiently and eagerly than a united Spain ever could?

There are 5 points those following this conflict should know and keep in mind as events unfold:

1. Catalonia has a formidable industrialized economy relative to other regions of Spain, with a GDP and population just exceeding those of nations like Scotland or Singapore, and likely could achieve and sustain independence from Spain.
2. NATO appears eager to encourage independence and would welcome what they expect to be a robust military capability to add to their wars of global aggression.

An article published in 2014 by the Atlantic Council – a Fortune 500-funded NATO think tank – titled, “[The Military Implications of Scottish and Catalanian Secession](#),” would state:

Catalonia has 7.3 million people, with more than \$300 billion in GDP. Spending just 1.6% of that on defense provides over \$4.5 billion annually, or roughly the budget of Denmark, which has well-regarded and efficient armed forces. Catalanian military plans are more vague, but so far, they emphasize the navy. With excellent ports in Barcelona and Tarragona, Catalonia is well-positioned as a minor naval power, ‘with the Mediterranean as our strategic environment, and NATO as our framework’, as the nationalists’ think-tank on defense argues. The rough plans call for a littoral security group of a few hundred sailors at first. After a few years, Catalonia would assume responsibility as “a main actor in the Mediterranean,” with land-based maritime patrol aircraft and small surface combatants. Eventually, the nationalist ambition may include an expeditionary group with a light assault carrier and hundreds of marines, to take a serious role in collective security.

The Atlantic Council piece would emphatically conclude that:

If accurately characterized by the few white papers that have surfaced, the separatists' position suggests a valuable and refreshing view of specialization in collective defense: build a navy that is comparatively focused on influencing events ashore.

3. Pro-independence Catalan politicians appear to enthusiastically support Catalonia's membership in NATO.

...when the next Afghanistan comes, Catalan blood will also be spilled.

A 2014 article titled, "[Catalan PM confirms NATO membership, commitment to collective security](#)," stated:

Prime Minister Artur Mas explicitly confirmed Catalonia is seeking NATO membership. In a recent interview with the Italian daily La Repubblica, Catalan Prime Minister Artur Mas explained that an independent Catalonia sees herself at the heart of NATO. This is in line with Catalonia's commitment to the international community, the principle of collective security, international law, and the rule of law at sea.

The article also claims:

Catalonia seeks freedom, not to avoid the inescapable responsibilities that come hand in hand with it, but to fully exercise them side by side with partners and allies. Catalans understand fully that freedom never comes without cost, and that whereas independence means government of the people, by the people, and for the people, instead of alien rule, it also means that they will not be able to look the other way when a crisis or challenge arises. They understand that when the next Afghanistan comes, Catalan blood will also be spilled.

In essence, Catalan politicians appear eagerly committed not only to NATO, but to the foreign wars of aggression it wages, and spilling the blood of its people to help NATO fight them.

4. Some Catalan politicians have begun planning for its military's integration into NATO.

The pro-independence Catalan National Assembly's Defense Policy Working Group has stated in a 2014 paper titled, "[Dimensions of the Catalan Defence Forces: Naval Forces \(Executive Summary\)](#)," that:

*The Mediterranean: our strategic environment. NATO: our framework
Catalonia must participate in SNMG2 (Standing NATO Maritime Group 2; formerly Standing Naval Force Mediterranean), a component of the NRF (NATO Response Force).*

It would also be convenient to participate in the SNMCMG2 (Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2).

5. Like "Kurdistan," any sort of "independence" is meaningless if the resulting state finds itself utterly dependent and entwined with Western hegemony and the institutions that maintain it – especially at the cost of member states and proxies – be they Kurdish or Catalan.

This article was originally published by [Land Destroyer Report](#) where the featured images was sourced.

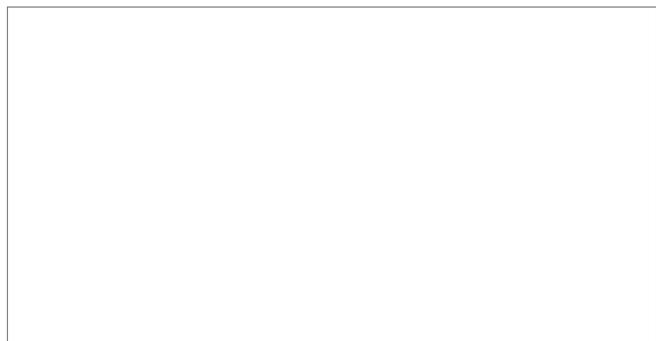
The original source of this article is Global Research

Catalonia Dreaming?

By [Guillem Vidal](#)

Global Research, September 30, 2017

[Defend Democracy Press](#) 28 September 2017



Just days away from the referendum promoted by secessionist forces, Spanish police arrested over a dozen senior officials from the [Generalitat](#) and carried out over forty raids in the Catalan government's headquarters. Social and political tensions have reached a new height as the unified state's repressive machinery has been set in motion. Protests are being stepped up and political rhetoric is ever more aggressive. If the irresponsible actions of the political class that led to this institutional breakdown continues, deep social conflict will follow.

This extreme situation was unthinkable less than a decade ago. According to the Catalan public polling body, only 15% of Catalans wanted an independent state when the economic crisis broke out in September 2008. Six years later, that number was up to 48%. Given the entire population of Catalonia (7.5m), this would mean that close to 2.5 million Catalans switched in favor of independence in over just six years. Why?

The escalation

At least two major events have contributed to the tense relations between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. First, the [Statute of Autonomy](#) approved by Catalans in 2006 underwent several amendments by the Spanish constitutional court in 2010. While the real changes are often exaggerated by secessionists, the reckless attitude of the central government dynamited any possibilities for agreement.

Second, the economic crisis triggered widespread political dissatisfaction with the functioning of Spanish democracy. The dire economic situation, unpopular austerity measures, and a series of large-scale corruption scandals affecting political elites, nourished the breeding ground for new movements and parties with a clear-cut enemy to blame. Some pointed to the banking and political elites. In Catalonia, the scapegoat became Spain itself.

Following the victory of the centre-right Popular Party (PP) in the Spanish general election of November 2011, many turned to independence as an expression of dissatisfaction with the Spanish government. It did not take long for the Catalan Right to embrace secessionism for the first time in an attempt to capitalise on this growing sentiment. At the time, the nationalist coalition [Convergència i Unió](#) (CiU) faced several corruption scandals and the political burden of managing the economic crisis.

Conflict was served. A coalition of strange bedfellows from the left and right united by their vision of a new Catalan state initiated the so-called *procés* (process) to independence. Claiming to represent the will of the Catalan people (as a homogeneous group) against corrupt and unreformable Spain in an unmistakably populist manner, they promised to dedicate all efforts to the creation of the newest state in Europe. It has proved to be a complicated task.

The case for independence

While the right to self-determination is a powerful moral tool, the international community reserves it for cases bolstered by human rights abuses. For a rich region with very high levels of self-government in one of Europe's advanced democracies, building a case for independence is a tough enterprise. Especially so when the country in question ranks highly on all democracy and political and civil rights indexes.

In spite of an adverse international scenario, the campaigning efforts in favour of independence have been persistent. Often, also manipulative. The main line of argument has been that of portraying Spain as an authoritarian state, hostile to Catalonia. While the Spanish state is far from perfect and the model of territorial administration (the [State of Autonomies](#)) is in serious need of revisiting, equating Spain to a dictatorship as if nothing had changed since Franco's regime is straying from the truth, to put it mildly.

Other arguments in favour of independence have revolved around a –rather questionable– fiscal plundering or historical reinterpretations dating back to 18th century monarchy wars. The debate, at times similar to the Brexit campaign, has been everything but a reasonable and informed discussion on the benefits and consequences of independence. For instance, the reiterated position expressed by EU officials about the potential exit of Catalonia from the EU in case of unilateral independence has been largely ignored if not deliberately misinterpreted.

Paradoxically, the greatest ally of secessionism has been the Spanish premier and his cabinet. Hiding behind a legalist banner, the *PP* have been pursuing an ostrich strategy for years. Not only have they refused to engage in finding any political solution to a growing political problem, but they have also undertaken dubious subterranean operations to weaken secessionist forces. The growing shift to independence, not surprisingly, comprises a large dose of protest against an immobile national government.

The road to October 1st

Regional elections were held in September 2015, nearly a year after the failed referendum attempt in 2014 (only participated in by pro-independence supporters). The results reflected a rather new stable equilibrium of preferences over the state's territorial disposition. Half favoured independence. The other half, either a federal state (more regional autonomy without independence), or remaining an autonomous community (maintaining the status quo).

The results did not grant the degree of legitimacy expected by the secessionist coalition to pursue their ambitions. Despite having a parliamentary majority, they failed to reach the 50% threshold. They were now trapped by the promise of staging a referendum on independence with no legitimacy to do so. Only through provoking a disproportionate reaction from the state to expose its repressive nature could they hope to win the necessary support for unilateral action. And that's what they did.

On September 6 and 7 the strategy materialised. Despite a majority of citizens rejecting unilateral action and with a minimal parliamentary majority, the secessionist coalition threw caution to the wind. In an irregular and speedy parliamentary procedure that by-passed the opposition, they approved illicit laws to hold a referendum and make its result binding. These laws were not only clearly at odds with the Spanish constitution, but also with the Catalan statute of autonomy approved in 2006. Unsurprisingly, the constitutional court declared such laws illegal within hours and the battle for the October 1 referendum that we are now witnessing commenced.

What next?

Nobody knows what will happen on October 1. The state's repressive machinery is in full motion, and Catalonia's treasury and regional police have been seized. Not only have senior Catalan officials been arrested but the police have raided and confiscated all material concerning the referendum. More recently, Catalan police have received orders to seal off all polling stations.

This full-scale intervention has provoked a large-scale public reaction against repression. The debate is now shifting from the right to secession and self-determination to the defence of freedom of expression. As it turns out, the Spanish government's toughness-without-solution approach might push many Catalans to vote on Sunday. If there is anywhere to vote, that is.

Whatever happens, the problem will not go away the day after. And it will be ever more complex. Between a central government that refuses to acknowledge an obvious political problem and a secessionist coalition that has proved reckless enough to operate outside the law to achieve its political objectives, the road to resolution will be long.

Any solution will inevitably pass through dialogue, but dialogue is useless if neither side is willing to compromise. The enforcement of the law will solve nothing without addressing the peaceful mobilisation of the pro-independence Catalans.. Yet, operating outside of the law must meet a decisive judiciary response. So far, the irresponsibility of both sides has led to a political deadlock and social tensions. It is time to sit and talk before it is too late.

The original source of this article is [Defend Democracy Press](#)

Catalonia: In the Face of Repression, We Defend Human Rights

By [Lafede.cat](#)

Global Research, September 30, 2017

[CADTM](#) 25 September 2017



Manifesto by Somos Defensores (We are Defenders)

*The referendum for self-determination in Catalonia, scheduled for October 1st and requested by a majority of Catalan citizens, seeks to determine the relationship between Catalonia and the Spanish state. The referendum is a mechanism to make the existing political conflict visible and transform it. **The repressive response of the Spanish State in order to prevent it, with judicial and police actions against democratically elected Catalan institutions, is a serious setback in terms of guaranteeing human rights and individual and collective freedoms in Catalonia, and a deterioration of democracy and the rule of law as a whole. These actions are unacceptable within the framework of democratic states.** This is why we, civil society, call for solidarity and national and international support, and ask for endorsement to this statement.*

SomosDefensoras

Ante la represión, defendamos los derechos humanos

MANIFIESTO

As entities with a long history of defending human rights, we denounce the measures taken by the Spanish State in response to the October 1st referendum -suspended but not yet declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court – as having basically intimidating purposes, in many cases have been made without judicial protection, and contravene international treaties ratified by the State such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Spanish Constitution itself and provisions of the Statute of Catalan Autonomy. **These measures are unnecessary, clearly disproportionate and involve the violation of four fundamental human rights: the right to a fair trial and effective judicial protection; the right to privacy, inviolability of the home and privacy of communications; the right to freedom of expression and information; and the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration.**

With regard to the right to a fair trial and effective judicial protection, and before the Attorney General's order citing public officials to declare, we DENOUNCE that this is an abusive procedural action that violates, among others, the principle of proportionality and minimum criminal intervention. We are facing a premature criminalisation – the facts to be pursued will not be consummated, in any case, not before October 1st – as well as unnecessary, since the prosecutor's order itself shows that legal proceedings including these facts have already been filed.

With regard to the right to privacy, inviolability of the home and privacy of communications, and in face of the proceedings against public and private postal service companies, we DENOUNCE that the right to privacy, in the private and social residence, and the privacy of communications, are basic rights in a state governed by the rule of law and can only be limited, by judicial order, for a legitimate purpose, and proportionately. These actions are unnecessary since they are not intended to protect a higher [interest](#) and have been decided arbitrarily.

With regard to the right to freedom of expression and to receive information, and in view of the various measures taken to prevent the dissemination of certain messages and campaigns, we want to point out that **restrictions on freedom of expression, a right which is part of the essential core of the democratic principle and political pluralism,** are only justified when the ideas in question involve a direct and serious infringement of other constitutionally protected rights or property, or are likely to entail real and serious harm or risk. With regard to the media, **any limits on the right to information should be based on the protection of other fundamental rights.** We DENOUNCE that the dissemination of the information that has been attempted to prohibit or limit, does not entail any serious damage, and that the measures taken against the media are exorbitant and unjustified interference.

With regard to the limitations on the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration, and on the prohibition of events, we DENOUNCE the absolute lack of justification for these limitations, given the proven peaceful nature of these events, and as an expression of political pluralism, one of the highest values according to the Spanish Constitution's article. 1.1. These are decisions that seek

to prosecute and criminalise legitimate citizen mobilisation, while rejecting the necessary channels for dialogue and negotiation of a peacefully expressed political conflict.

It is for these reasons and legal reasoning that we consider it imperative to urgently stop the repressive escalation in matter of human rights and fundamental freedoms that is taking place in Catalonia. And for that to be so,

We demand political representatives to fulfil their task of resolving problems politically and not with repressive actions towards those they represent.

We encourage citizens to continue to defend their rights through mobilisation, gatherings, demonstrations or actions of civil disobedience, following the principles of non-violence and peace.

We stand in solidarity with all who have suffered repression so far.

In face of any further violations of fundamental rights we announce that **we are launching a Rights' Observers Network to follow the events on October 1st**, together with legal and psychosocial support, and are **activating mechanisms for reporting, counselling and protection** to deal with police and judicial actions from now until the day of the referendum, and if necessary, to be maintained afterwards.

Sign the manifest [here](#).

This article was originally published in Spanish by [Lafede.cat](#).

Featured image is from [EUobserver](#).

The original source of this article is [CADTM](#)

Catalonia Referendum: Resisting the Spanish Government Siege

By [Dick Nichols](#)

Global Research, September 25, 2017

[Socialist Project](#) 23 September 2017



In 1713-14, it took the troops of Spain's Borbon monarchy 14 months of siege before taking Barcelona and ending Catalan self-rule. In September 2017, Catalonia is again under siege, this

*time from the central Spanish People's Party (PP) government. Under prime minister **Mariano Rajoy** the Spanish state is concentrating all its firepower on stopping the Catalan government's October 1 independence referendum. On that day, if this siege is successfully resisted, Catalan citizens will vote on whether "Catalonia should become an independent state in the form of a republic."*

Since September 6, the day its parliament adopted its referendum law, Catalonia has experienced a "shock and awe" offensive aimed at forcing the pro-independence government of premier **Carles Puigdemont** to submit to the central Spanish administration. The adoption of the law by the parliamentary majority of 62 Together For The Yes (JxSi) and 10 People's Unity List (CUP) MPs was the culmination of an eight-year process that has seen over one million people mobilize every Catalan National Day since 2012.

The stakes could not be higher. If the referendum takes place, the PP minority government in Madrid will suffer a lethal blow to its credibility, opening the way to a change of government in the Spanish state. It would also bring into view the prospect of finally overturning the sub-democratic regime that has been in place in Spain since the late 1970s, when the heirs of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco negotiated a flawed "transition to democracy" with the anti-dictatorship resistance.

By the same token, if the Rajoy government manages to stop October 1, it will be a setback not only for Catalan aspirations to sovereignty but also for all forces in Spain fighting for democratic rights and against austerity. The partial weakening of the "1978 regime" represented by the rise of anti-austerity party Podemos and its allies would be contained: the "constitutionalist" parties – the PP, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and the hipster neoliberal outfit Citizens – would be strengthened.

Understanding of the stakes of the fight is increasingly reaching across the whole Spanish state, with left forces like Podemos and the older United Left, which had originally rejected October 1 as "not the referendum Catalonia needs," now allying with pro-independence forces in the face of a legal and police offensive that amounts to a state of emergency in all but name.

The Fear Campaign

These stark possible outcomes to the conflict explain the ferocity of the Spanish government's offensive. The Spanish Constitutional Court's immediate decisions to suspend both the referendum law and the Law of Jurisdictional Transition (to apply in the case on a Yes win) have allowed Spanish prosecutor-general **José Manuel Maza** to unleash a judicial firestorm via regional Catalan prosecutors' offices and the High Court of Justice of Catalonia. To date the main thrusts of the offensive have been to:

- Charge those members of the Catalan parliament's speakers' panel who enables debate on the laws with disobeying a lawful instruction and perverting the course of justice;
- Instruct the electoral commission appointed by the Catalan parliament first to cease all work on the referendum and two days later charging them with usurping public functions, disobedience and misuse of public funds;
- Formally warn all MPs supporting the Catalan government and 700 senior public servants that any collaboration with the referendum will open them to charges of disobedience, perverting the course of justice and misuse of public funds;
- Instruct the Catalan police, Spanish National Police, the paramilitary Civil Guard and municipal police forces to locate and confiscate all material related to the referendum;
- Warn all private media that if they carry advertising material for October 1 they will be liable to prosecution and instructing the heads of Catalan public radio and TV not to carry advertising material for the referendum;
- Advise owners of halls and public spaces that hosting any events connected with the referendum will open them to prosecution;

- Have the Spanish postal service instruct its employees not to deliver any material connected to the referendum;
- Order the closure of the web sites of the Association of Municipalities for Independence (AMI) and the Catalan Association of Municipalities and Shires (ACM) for facilitating collaboration with the referendum and then order the closure of any web site in any way connected with October 1; and
- Open proceedings against the 712 Catalan mayors (out of 948) who have indicated that their councils will make premises available – as per normal – for the referendum. The mayors are to be summoned to regional prosecutor’s offices, where they will face charges of disobeying a lawful instruction, perversion of the course of justice and misuse of public funds (which carries a jail sentence). The Catalan police have been ordered to arrest any mayor who fails his or her appointment with the prosecutor.

Most seriously of all, in the face of a Catalan government refusal to continue to supply the central Spanish government with a weekly report of its expenditures, the Spanish Council of Ministers (cabinet) decided on September 15 to take direct control of all payments to Catalonia’s creditors, effectively ending its financial autonomy.

Police actions in support of this offensive have so far included a Civil Guard raid on the newspaper *El Vallenc* (with the editor charged with disobedience, perverting the course of justice and misuse of public funds) and the National Police preventing the anti-capitalist CUP from reading a pro-independence manifesto in Valencia. On September 14, **Dolors Sabater**, the mayoress of Badalona, Catalonia’s third largest city which is run by a left coalition including pro-independence and pro-sovereignty forces, denounced the Spanish government delegation in Barcelona for making threatening telephone calls to council employees.

At the time of writing (September 17), the Civil Guard claims to have confiscated 1.3 million posters from printerries in Catalonia, while municipal police has been engaged in low-intensity harassment of Yes campaign stalls. However, the main meetings of the referendum campaign, including the Yes case’s 13,000-strong launch in the southern industrial city of Tarragona, have so far gone ahead without impediment.

The most potentially damaging action to date was the Civil Guard’s closing of the referendum web site. When this was done on September 13 the Catalan government had two replacement sites on line immediately. These and others were then closed down by September 15, but on September 16 premier Puigdemont tweeted instructions on how to access the referendum web site via proxy servers invulnerable to against Civil Guard interference.

Symptomatic of the rising concern the Catalan rebellion is causing in the establishment was the September 12 decision of a Madrid judge to ban a meeting on the Catalan right to decide from taking place on Madrid Council premises: the grounds were that “the general interests of the citizens precludes the realization of public events in favour of an illegal referendum.” The organizers of the meeting, the platform Madrid for the Right to Decide, then rescheduled the meeting to another location. When it was finally held on September 16, the crowd overflowed the theatre and filled the nearby street.

At the time of writing, over 60,000 people potentially face charges for associating themselves with the “illegal” referendum and the rumours are of even more drastic action to come. The PP is supposedly moving towards establishing the legal and political grounds for suspending the Catalan government under article 155 of the Spanish Constitution; 4000 extra National Police are ready to be deployed; the Civil Guard is bringing extra agents into Catalonia – such is the daily dose of psychological warfare to which Catalans are being exposed.

In a September 17 interview with the web-based daily *VilaWeb* premier Puigdemont described how far he thought the Spanish government’s intervention had come:

“[T]he Spanish government is near as well implementing articles 116 [covering conditions for

declaring states of emergency or siege] and 155 without having to declare them. It is looking for the practical impact of a state of emergency – suspension of public events, confiscation of informative material, intimidation of the means of communication, creation of a generalised climate of persecution of all mayors...”

On September 16, in an address to the PP faithful in Barcelona, prime minister Rajoy warned:

“Don’t force us to go to a point that we don’t want to arrive at.”

Who are the Authoritarians?

The blatant goal of the central government campaign has been to create a climate of fear and panic: the October 1 referendum is a political Chernobyl – if you even touch it you won’t only go to jail, you’ll lose all your assets – like former Catalan premier Artur Mas and three of his ministers, who stand to lose five million euros for allowing a September 9, 2014 “participatory process” (9N) to go ahead in the face of a court ban (over 2.3 million of Catalonia’s 5.5 million voters took part).

Central government ministers have personally weighed into this campaign. On September 12, finance minister Cristobal Montoro said that “nobody’s going to use a euro of public money against the law: it didn’t happen on November 9, and it won’t happen on October 1, unless someone wants to put their assets at risk.” On September 13, Rajoy announced:

“I say to everyone who understands that the government has to carry out its obligation, that we’re going to do that, that they needn’t worry. If anyone is asked to staff a voting centre, don’t go because there can’t be a referendum and it would be an absolutely illegal act.”

With this statement Rajoy unwittingly betrayed his government’s double approach: to stop the referendum by any and every means that don’t entail an intolerable political cost (like sending in the army) and, if that’s finally not possible, to at least drive participation in the referendum to as low a point as possible.

At the core of the PP approach is the big lie that the Spanish government has no choice but to have the law obeyed because a Scottish-style negotiated referendum was always impossible under the Spanish constitution. However, as many Spanish jurists have pointed out, the Constitution provides mechanisms for consultations of a part of the population of the Spanish state – the PP chose not to have one in the Catalan case because it has always seen greater political gain in cultivating anti-Catalanism in the rest of Spain.

Having made that choice, the PP has then had no option but to paint and themselves as the staunch and principled upholders of constitutionality against the authoritarian and anti-democratic Catalan outlaws “abducted” (term of prosecutor-general Maza) by separatism. Matters have reached the bizarre point where some PPer have accused the Catalan government of having Nazi and Francoist tendencies.

The Fight to Adopt the Referendum Law

It was the need to paint the Catalan movement in these black terms that drove the tactics of the PP and the other unionist parties in the September 6 and 7 sessions of the Catalan parliament that adopted the new laws. Spanish television channels were able to broadcast two days of filibustering, procedural haggling and theatrical outrage from the PP, Citizens, the Party of Socialists of Catalonia (PSC) and even from a fraction of the left coalition Catalonia Yes We Can (CSQEP).

It could not have been otherwise. In order to get a referendum in Catalonia in the face of the Spanish institutional refusal to negotiate (18 rejections since 2012), the Catalan parliamentary majority had no choice but to develop its own referendum bill. It was inevitable that this would be met with filibustering and procedural antics aimed at bogging down its adoption. To get it through parliament without giving the opposition the chance to delay its implementation through court

appeals, the majority also had to use a fast track procedural provision.

The majority also had to shun the advice of the parliamentary speakership panel's two legal advisers – who pointed out the bill's unconstitutionality in terms of Spanish law – and to refuse to allow parliament to seek an opinion from the Catalan Council of Statutory Guarantees, which would also have been certain to point out that incompatibility. CQSEP MP Joan Coscubiela described this approach as “unprecedentedly anti-democratic.”

However, premier Puigdemont justified it in these words:

“They’ll get us lost talking about public servants, attorneys-at-law, the Council of Guarantees... However, what is important are the citizens. And they are demanding respect for fundamental rights, for human rights, including the right to self-determination.”

In the two days of acrimonious debate, the PP and Citizens speakers made a point of speaking in Spanish, so that their message could be understood by people in the rest of Spain (the interventions of the majority, done in Catalan, would have been mainly lost on them). The supposedly undemocratic behavior of the speakership panel majority and of the speaker Carme Forcadell could thereby more readily become an “accepted truth” for Spanish public opinion: this impression would have hopefully been reinforced for the PP, Citizens and the PSC by their decision to walk out of the chamber when the final vote was taken on both pieces of legislation.

The conservative Madrid media – sworn enemy of the right to self-determination and even of acknowledging Spain's plurinational reality – described the adoption of the new laws as “democracy kidnapped” (*La Razón*) and a “coup d'état” (*ABC*). The Spanish deputy prime minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, in charge of the PP government's operations against Catalonia, said: “I've never felt such shame on behalf of democracy in my life.”

Prime minister Rajoy then used the supposedly outrageous behavior of the Catalan parliament to justify his government's legal carpet bombing. He warned on September 13:

“This was an anti-democratic act, a blow against democracy. And in Spain the law gets carried out because if not it would mean that the will of the majority of citizens counts for nothing.”

The Battle for Participation

How has the Catalan government reacted to this aggression?

On the one hand by insisting that all logistics are in place for October 1, that the referendum will be going ahead regardless of the legal and constitutional barrage, and that people should be able to vote at their usual polling station. In cases where local councils refuse to make these available, the Catalan government will make its own premises available as voting centres. At the September 14 launch of the Yes campaign, Puigdemont said: “Does anyone really believe we won't be voting on October 1? What sort of people do they think we are?”

Such confidence became more plausible earlier on the same day, when the Catalan government and Barcelona Council announced they had reached an agreement on providing voting centres in the Barcelona area. This was an important gain in the critical battle for participation, because it puts Catalonia's biggest municipality on the side of October 1. **Ada Colau**, the Barcelona mayoress who had come in for criticism for delaying a decision on the issue, came to the agreement with the government despite advice from the council's legal service that it would potentially open the administration to prosecution.

On September 16, when the mayors potentially facing charges demonstrated in central Barcelona, Colau was there to greet them on behalf of Barcelona Council. She said:

“This is not about independence. They will find an entire people against them in defence of the rights that have cost so much to win.”

Colau’s position reflected a shift in Catalonia’s non-independence left towards participating in October 1, even while still regarding it as “not the referendum Catalonia needs” but mobilization against the Rajoy government and for a Catalan right to decide. This is because a considerable part of its support – mainly but not only working people from other parts of Spain who have immigrated to Catalonia – do not support a unilateral referendum in which the independence case is likely to win. In the world of the “commons” – the catch-all term for Barcelona en Comú (running Barcelona Council), En Comú Podem (largest Catalan force in the Spanish parliament) and Catalunya en Comú (grouping together Barcelona en Comú and the “old left” forces Initiative for Catalonia-Greens, United and Alternative Left and the green party Equo) – the October 1 referendum had intensified differences over how to relate to a unilateral consultation.

However, in the atmosphere of increasing aggression from the Rajoy government a shift towards greater support for October 1 showed in the results of Catalunya en Comú’s membership ballot on whether to participate. The result was 59.39% for to 41.61% against, with 44% of the membership taking part. According to its coordinator Xavier Domènech, Catalunya en Comú will “stage events denouncing the repression and affirming the rights of the Catalans ... If, finally, there are ballot boxes, we’ll be going to vote.” This was a move away from an initial orientation that focused more on demanding guarantees from the Catalan government than on how Catalunya en Comú might be able to intervene most fruitfully in the referendum process.

It also represented a defeat for those forces in the party that had called for a boycott of October 1, as organized around the manifesto “Don’t Participate or Call for Participation in the October 1 Referendum.” The shift also came with the effective dropping of their call by Pablo Iglesias and Alberto Garzón, leaders at the level of the Spanish state of Podemos and the United Left, for the commons not to participate.

Nevertheless, despite the Catalunya en Comú membership ballot result certain mayors within the universe of the commons will still not be making their councils premises available for the referendum, the main example being the Initiative For Catalonia mayor of the greater Barcelona industrial town El Prat de Llobregat. In other councils where councilors from the commons are part of the government – especially in partnership with ERC – they have already voted to make premises available on October 1.

As for the PSC, it is driving the campaign among working-class voters to ensure that October 1 is a low turnout flop if it eventually goes ahead. In the two provincial capitals run by the Catalan social democracy (Lleida and Tarragona) councils have refused to make premises available despite protests demanding that they do. The PSC has denounced the supposed intimidation these demonstrations represent. In others towns it controls, such as the outer Barcelona industrial city of Santa Colomer de Gramanet, the PSC has refused to make council premises available for meetings on the referendum.

The party has started an active boycott campaign, launching a manifesto called “On the illegal ‘referendum’ of October 1.” There are signs that this may be beginning to have some effect: all polls previous to September 17 showed around 50% of PSC supporters prepared to vote in the referendum. This figure has fallen in the latest Opinòmetre poll to 35%.

However, even as it tries to wreck October 1 and supports all legal activity to stop it, the PSC has to try to appear as not simply the running dog of the PP. A sign that it does not want to cut all ties with forces supporting the referendum was a September 10 statement by PSOE federal secretary **Pedro Sánchez** to the effect that, even if Barcelona Council provided voting centres for the referendum, he did not think the PSC should break its governing alliance with Ada Colau’s party (Barcelona en Comú).

Conclusion

If morale and commitment were enough to win on October 1, the victory would already be secure. In the days since the 712 mayors were summoned to appear before the prosecutors, 38 more have signed up to make their council's premises available for the referendum. To ensure the proper staffing of voting stations, 5000 volunteers were needed: 47,000 have put their name down to help (13,000 more than for 9N).

Nonetheless, the Rajoy government simply cannot afford to lose this fight. Backed by the monarchy, big business, the establishment media, three of the four major Spanish parties and the four main associations of judges, it still remains confident in its capacity to cripple the Puigdemont government.

The deciding factors will be: whether the Puigdemont government is organized enough to ward off Madrid's sustained attack on the logistics of October 1; whether the mass of Catalan supporters of independence – and of basic democratic rights – are strong enough to make the Rajoy government pay as high a political price as possible for each new act of aggression; and whether, in the case that the referendum goes ahead, the enormous media campaign to denigrate it as a “fraud” fails to reduce participation.

At the time of writing the political cost of the Rajoy government's aggression is increasing, domestically and internationally. For example, while its legal aggression has received no explicit support from beyond the borders of the Spanish state, support for a negotiated referendum has come from the Scottish government and from 17 Danish parliamentarians representing seven different parties.

Within Catalonia, the Civil Guard's confiscation of posters is being answered with the reproduction on home printers of posters downloaded from improvised web sites and then pasted up by teams of volunteers from the Catalan mass organizations. The September 16-17 weekend meetings on the referendum went ahead without police interference and were bigger than all expectations (and the halls in which they were supposed to fit). On September 17, 30,000 marched in Bilbao (in the Basque Country) in support of Catalonia's referendum.

The campaign for October 1 is increasingly taking the form of a peaceful insurrection for democracy against the authoritarian Spanish state – all democrats will be doing what they can to help it prevail.

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In Defence of Democratic Rights in Catalonia

By [José Luis Martínez](#)

Global Research, September 25, 2017

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*In Catalonia an important process of independence is taking place against Spain. At the request of the Popular Party (PP), the Spanish Constitutional Court declared the Catalan Statute of 2010, unconstitutional. This statute was negotiated between the Government of **José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero** and later endorsed by the Spanish Parliament. Since then, the number of Catalans who want to become independent from Spain has not stopped growing.*

The degree of autonomy that Catalonia was going to reach was far too much for a right-wing party as the PP, despite the 2010 statute cuts which were decided by the Spanish parliament.

Chronology of the Process of Independence of Catalonia

- [November 9, 2014](#): A consultation for independence was held, prohibited by the Constitutional Court. Almost 2.3 million people participated in it. These were the results: 80.72% 'YES', 4.55% 'NO', 9.56% in blank votes and the rest with other answers. **Artur Mas**, the former president of the Autonomous Community, called the vote a total success due to the conditions in which they were held. In an appearance on the night of the vote, he sent two messages to the central government: The Catalans had made it clear that they wanted independence and they wanted to decide their political future.
- November 20, 2014: The Board of Prosecutors concluded that there were conditions to act against the Catalan president for holding the consultation on 9 November and, after a debate of more than four hours, it was understood that there was disobedience to the Constitutional Court, which had banned the consultation.
- January 14, 2015: Following an agreement between the President of Catalonia and the leader of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), **Oriol Junqueras**, supported by the President of the Catalan National Assembly, **Carme Forcadell**, the Òmnium Cultural, **Muriel Casals**, and the president of the Association of Municipalities for Independence, **Josep Maria Vila d'Abadal**, the *Generalitat* convenes early [elections for the 27 September](#) of that year.
- September 11, 2015: Demonstration of the *Diada* prior to 27 September. According to the organization, two million people participated; however, the Urban Guard gave an estimated participation of 1.2 million people.
- November 13, 2016: Thousands of people gathered to show their support for the Catalanian politicians who were being investigated by the Spanish court, including Artur Mas himself.

The ex-president said that he did not disobey the law, but rather, he obeyed the mandate of the people of Catalonia and called for the consultation on 9 November. Puigdemont, the current president of Catalonia, defended that Catalonia will decide its relationship with Spain freely and at the polls and said: “I hope that the government in Madrid will listen to the people.”

- March 13, 2017: Artur Mas is convicted of disobeying two years of political inactivity and a fine of 36,500 euros. Ortega and Rigau are also sentenced, for the same offence of one year and nine months and one year and six months respectively. In addition, Ortega will have to pay a fine of 30,000 euros, while Rigau must pay 24,000 euros.
- May 22, 2017: In a conference in Madrid, Puigdemont, accompanied by the Vice-President of the Catalanian Government and ERC leader, **Oriol Junqueras**, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Raül Romeva**, reiterated again the desire to dialogue with the central government to agree on the question, date and necessary majority of the referendum, but added that the referendum will be held, even if the central government refuses to negotiate.
- May 24, 2017: Puigdemont sent a letter to **Mariano Rajoy**, President of Spain, stating that it would be necessary for the two governments to start a dialogue. In his letter he said that the *Generalitat* had the maximum will to seek a peaceful agreed solution, but respecting the will of the Catalan people.
- May 25, 2017: Rajoy responded to Puigdemont’s letter with a resounding NO. The President of the central government rejects any kind of negotiation about the referendum and accuses the Catalanian government of threatening the central State.
- June 9, 2017: Puigdemont announced that the [referendum for independence](#) would be held on Sunday, 1 October 2017 with the question: “Do you agree with an independent State in the form of a Republic?”
- September 6, 2017: The Catalan Parliament approved the law of the referendum and the president convened the consultation for 1 October. In a controversial parliamentary session in which the left grouped in *Catalunya sí que es pot* abstained.
- September 7, 2017: Prior to the referendum, the central government responded with a series of reprisals from the Spanish state. The Constitutional Court prohibited the referendum and warned thousand Catalanian politicians. The Prosecutor’s Office issues a complaint against Puigdemont and the Catalanian government. Rajoy announced, after meeting with **Pedro Sánchez** (PSOE) – who assured all his support to the central government – that he will do anything to stop the referendum. But the Catalan Parliament gave the green light to the Law of Legal and Fundamental Transiency of the Republic and Puigdemont ratified that the referendum should continue despite the complaints.
- September 8, 2017: Inspections by the Civil Guard began in search of ballot boxes and ballots, ordered by the Attorney General’s Office. The Civil Guard inspected printing shops, the headquarters of the newspaper *El Vallenc* and private vehicles in search of propaganda material for the referendum. The controls have been repeated every day so far. There have been multiple peaceful demonstrations against these police acts and also Julian Assange defends the right to decide of the Catalans.
- September 11, 2017: A new *Diada* demonstration with more than 1 million people in favour of the referendum. In his institutional message, Puigdemont says: “No one can disable us.”
- September 15, 2017: The central government intervened in the accounts of the government of Catalonia and suspended several fiscal competencies.
- September 17, 2017: In Madrid, an event was held in support of the right to decide, which had previously been banned by a Madrid court. In spite of this, thousands of people gathered. There was a large police presence and the threat of fascist groups attacking the event.
- September 19, 2017: The Civil Guard took the voters’ census for the referendum and the interrogation by the prosecution of more than 700 Catalan mayors who support the

referendum starts. If they do not attend the interrogation, the persecutors office threatens them with jail.

This chronology is not complete, but it shows the milestones in this dispute.

The Spanish Left and the Catalan Referendum

Both [Podemos](#) and [Izquierda Unida](#) support a referendum but with guarantees. Podemos sees the referendum as a citizen mobilization, but believes that it cannot be binding. **Izquierda Unida**, for its part, says that the question of the referendum leaves out people who want a federal state, to which the various existing nationalities of the Spanish State can freely adhere.



Source: Socialist Project

The problem of guarantees is that, if the central government does not want to negotiate, the guarantees that are demanded cannot be given, since the updated voters' census can only be given by the central government.

Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (EUiA), the political counterpart of Izquierda Unida in Catalonia, decided on 17 September to appeal to the Catalan people to participate in the referendum, although EUiA is against the independence of Catalonia.

And here I come to the most controversial point. Who leads the process of independence? The Catalan bourgeoisie is not exactly a very democratic bourgeoisie and is immersed in many scandals of corruption. Although the movement for independence is very transversal, it is highly questionable that independence will serve the working classes, as the parties of the Catalan bourgeoisie have approved in the Catalan government the biggest cuts in health and education among others and have supported the central government when the Spanish parliament has passed anti-democratic laws such as the "Law Mordaza" that cut many democratic rights in order to curb the protests of the citizens against antisocial policies. I personally would vote NO for independence for the reasons mentioned above. However, this does not detract from the right of self-determination of the people. I sincerely believe that the NO would win in a referendum, if it could be carried out with the necessary guarantees, and a democracy should allow the people to decide about their future.

The 2010 surveys indicated that 35% of Catalans wanted independence, but now the surveys say that there are almost 50% of Catalonians that want independence. In addition, several surveys point out that 80% of the Catalan people want a referendum and 60% have said that they will participate, even if the Spanish State forbids it.

The repression and intransigence of the government of Mariano Rajoy have made many people in Catalonia stand for independence. And if his party continues with this repressive policy, it is expected that soon this number will increase.

A Few Questions

- What are the limits of sovereignty?
- Is there a right of self-determination only for the colonies or also for the nationalities of consolidated autonomous States?
- Why is it not possible in Spain what has been possible in the United Kingdom with Scotland?
- Do the Spanish government and the king fear that a Catalan rupture will provoke an increase in the struggle for a republic in Spain?

I had already finished this article, but the events of today, 20 September, in Catalonia made me have to expand it. This morning the Civil Guard and the National Police Corps entered in several Catalan government departments, they have registered the departments and arrested some 14 people, including officials of the government of Catalonia. The leftist parties in Spain have called for a fight against this new repressive spiral of the central government of the PP that is a *de facto* state of exception in Catalonia.

It is no longer just the right of people to decide. The leaders of Podemos and Izquierda Unida have said:

“We must also defend democratic rights because of this dictatorial move by the Spanish government.”

They have called for actively defending the democratic rights that are being cut drastically in the Spanish State. In response, tens of thousands of people have concentrated on ‘Puerta del Sol’ in Madrid and other Spanish cities.

What has become clear is that the ruling party has not been detached from its fascist roots. It is necessary to remember that this party was created by seven ex-ministers of the dictator Franco.

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