

The Government of Catalonia's Commitment to the Referendum

The history of Catalonia as a nation has been marked by the fight for liberty. This burning desire of our people has time and again been squashed by a legal framework which too often has neither listened to nor respected the will of the Catalan people. When this has happened, this difference of opinion has almost never been resolved through dialogue, negotiation and a reaching of accords, but rather with the State imposing its force and trampling the rights and freedoms of Catalonia.

It has been this way for centuries, from the War of Spanish Succession and the Nueva Planta decrees that followed, to the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. In all of these instances, the Catalan authorities have received the reprisal of the Spanish Government. The most recent past reminds us that all the Catalan Government's presidents during the twentieth century have suffered exile or been imprisoned for defending our liberties, with the assassination of President Companys as a paradigm of just how far the Spanish State has been willing to go to crush our will. More recent examples of this lack of respect for democracy include the Constitutional Court's mutilation of the Statute, approved by Parliament and later ratified by the Catalan people in a referendum, and the condemning of Former President Artur Mas and the members of his Administration, Francesc Homs, Irene Rigau and Joana Ortega, for having put out the ballot boxes.

At this moment we find ourselves once again at a historic crossroads. While the immense majority of Catalans want to decide our future through a mutually agreed referendum, with a free and peaceful vote—just as any democratic society would resolve any discrepancy—the Courts and the Spanish Government have refused repeatedly this possibility. The only response we have received to this request, supported by a Parliamentary majority, has been through judicial means.

If today we have come this far, it is thanks to one thing and one thing only: the will of the men and women who, coming from all walks of life, make up Catalonia. They are the ones who, whenever possible, have come forth to defend self-government, organise their own institutions and defend their own identity to draw up a common future based on progress and the welfare of the people.

In recent years this drive has grown into a clear, resounding call from the majority to exercise Catalonia's right to self-determination. A right we have never renounced and which the Parliament of Catalonia, the chamber representing popular sovereignty, has never stopped claiming. As early as 12 December 1989, a parliamentary committee passed the decision stating that it would not give up the right to exercise self-determination, and in 1991, at the plenary session to debate general politics, Parliament approved a text in favour of the right to self-determination.

The Government gathered here today is the result, not the cause, of this majority will of the people of Catalonia. It is on this legitimacy and no other that it stands.

For this reason, the Government of Catalonia, as a whole, once again states its commitment to hold a referendum that must become the practical exercise of an inalienable right: the right to self-determination.

Each and every one of the members of this Government is responsible for this task. We promise to carry it out and follow through with the results. We do so because the only duty we have, the most important, is the trust placed in us by the people of Catalonia. Here in the Pati dels Tarongers, from our seat of government, today we commit to organising, calling and holding a referendum in response to the democratic mandate handed to us by the people.

Palau de la Generalitat

21 April 2017