

Official Statement by the President on the invocation of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution

Barcelona, 21 October 2017

All the proposals for dialogue addressed to the Spanish state have had the same answer: either silence or repression. In my last letter to the Spanish president, I reiterated the need to talk and reminded him that this is the demand that has been asked of us by many people, from many places. Today, Spain's Council of Ministers has shut the door on this demand and on this request, and has announced a series of measures and cessations that directly represent the removal of our self-government and the democratic will of the Catalans. What the Catalans decided in the polls the Spanish government abolishes in lawsuits.

In this way, the Spanish government, with the support of the Socialist Party and Ciudadanos, has embarked on the worst attack on Catalonia's institutions and the Catalan people since the decrees of the military dictator Francisco Franco, which abolished the Generalitat of Catalonia. By disregarding the popular will expressed in a clear and massive way in the elections of September 27, 2015 and violating our Parliament with all the guarantees and the rights of the Members of Parliament who chose the President of the Generalitat and approved the Government program, the Spanish Government has illegally proclaimed itself as the representative of the will of the Catalans.

Without the endorsement of the polls, with little support and going against the will of the majority, the government of Mariano Rajoy wants to appoint a bureau to control Catalonia from Madrid.

This is not the first time that, with the assistance of the King, Catalan institutions have received a blow from the Spanish state as a means to reduce them, reorient them or directly eliminate them. On each occasion, the Catalan people have been able overcome the situation in a stronger and more determined way, aware that these aggressions have always obscured the State's ability to engage in politics, and as a consequence, they saw that it was necessary to achieve higher levels of self-government. From the regionalism of the beginning of the 20th century to sovereignty in the 21st century, the hegemonic idea in Catalonia has always been the same.

The Generalitat is not an institution that was born with the current Spanish constitution. Long before the approval of the Magna Carta, the Generalitat was already functioning and was temporarily restored based on its historical legitimacy and the continuity that presidents Companys, Irla and Tarradellas ensured while in exile. No decision by any government can erase this fact that has been persistent over time: it has been the will of the Catalans that has allowed us to defend and restore our institutions. What we have, we have achieved it with the strength of the people and the power of democracy.

The Catalan institutions and the people of Catalonia cannot accept this attack. The humiliation intended by the Spanish government to become a guardian of all public life in Catalonia, from the Government to public media, is incompatible with a democratic attitude and resides outside the rule of law. Because imposing a form of government not chosen by the citizens and without a parliamentary majority that endorses it is incompatible with the rule of law.

The same applies with those who act violently and with impunity against peaceful citizens, or those who use old criminal codes to keep two peaceful citizens in prison when they have committed no crime, or persecuting ideas and the media, or irresponsibly creating economic instability. Or when the People's Party very irresponsibly gathered signatures under the leadership of the current president, Mariano Rajoy, for an infamous petition against Catalonia and the shameful ruling by the Constitutional Court that came afterwards. I stress afterwards because that was after the Statute of Catalonia was approved by way of a legal and agreed referendum. Those who acted irresponsibly and who belittled the will of the Catalans and violated the constitutional pact of 1978 are the same people who today want to rule over us.

I am aware, therefore, of the threat that weighs over the people of Catalonia if the State perpetuates its destructive intent. We must call it upon ourselves to defend, once again, our institutions as we have always done, in a peaceful and civilized way, filled with dignity and reasons. That is why I will ask the Catalan Parliament to convoke a plenary session where representatives of the people's sovereignty, elected with the votes of the citizens, can debate and decide on this attempt to abolish our self-government and our democracy, and act accordingly.

I want to send a message to the Spanish democrats. What is being done with regard to Catalonia is a direct attack on democracy that opens the door to other abuses of the same nature in other places, not just in Catalonia. To criminalize the dissident, to deny the reality and to build walls of legality in the face of the windows on the will of the citizens... if all of this succeeds, it is democracy that will be harmed, and therefore the citizens, it will be very serious and will be a monumental setback. We shouldn't allow this to happen.

I want to address a message to Europe. Not only to its political leaders but also, and especially, to all European citizens, our brothers and sisters, with whom we share European citizenship.

If the EU's foundational values are at risk in Catalonia, they will also be at risk in Europe. Democratically deciding the future of a nation is not a crime. This goes against the foundations that unite European citizens through their diversity.

Catalonia is an ancient European nation. It is core to the European values. What we ask for, we do it because we believe in a democratic and peaceful Europe. The Europe of the Charter of Fundamental Rights that should protect each and everyone of us. You should know that what you are fighting for at home, we are also fighting for in Catalonia. And we will continue to do so.

Carles Puigdemont Casamajó
President of the Catalan Government