

# *Catalans Hold Pro-Independence Demonstration*

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Madrid, October 9 (RHC)-- Students in the Catalan capital Barcelona gathered in protest at the Spanish constitutional court's ruling that stops Catalonia from holding an independence referendum. The demonstration took place on Wednesday, with protesters wearing white masks with a black cross covering the mouth.

Last week, Catalan leaders set up a regional control commission following the Spanish government's move to block the vote on independence. Over the weekend, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy urged the leaders of the Catalonia region to resolve their differences with Madrid over the independence referendum through dialog.

On September 29th, Spain's constitutional court suspended Catalonia's referendum on independence after a request from Rajoy. On September 30, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Barcelona, vowing to disobey Spain's blocking of Catalonia's independence referendum.

The Catalan government said on October 3rd that it would push ahead with its scheduled plan to hold the referendum, despite the court order to suspend the vote.

Despite all controversies, a "Yes" vote for independence in the non-binding referendum will not automatically lead to the secession of the region. The vote would only give the Catalan president the

mandate to negotiate independence with the Spanish administration.

The wealthy northeastern region of Spain has a population of 7.6 million people, accounting for nearly one-fifth of the country's economy, and has been seeking independence for years.

Polls indicate that a huge majority of Catalans demand an independence referendum, encouraged by a similar referendum in Scotland last month. The Scottish referendum, however, did not end in favor of pro-independence voters.

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