

Spain Threatens Catalan Independence Poll Workers With Fines



Madrid, September 30 (RHC-Telesur)-- The Spanish central government is continuing to try to stop Sunday's independence referendum vote in Catalonia.

On Friday, Madrid announced that individuals facilitating the vote or working at polling stations there could face a fine of over US\$700,000.

The announcement came as Catalan officials demonstrated new ballot boxes at a press conference.

In response to the threat, Catalan Minister of Education Clara Ponsati and Minister of Labor Dolors Bassa announced that they will take full judicial responsibility for all public high schools and civic centers. These spaces will host more than 2,300 polling stations throughout Catalonia.

According to the ministers, this rescinds all principals and school employees of "any role or responsibility" for participating in the vote, while ensuring an "efficient, effective and administrative coordination."

Hundreds of teachers and administrators have also showed up on the streets of Barcelona, uniformly shaking school keys in the air and lining up to hand them over to the ministers and Catalan government officials in a show of support for Sunday's vote.

Protesters continue to support the right to vote in the streets of Barcelona, a continuation of mass student and firefighter protests.

Catalonia's chief prosecutor has ordered the region's police force, Mossos Squad, not to allow people to enter any planned polling stations on Sunday and not allow any voting within 100 meters of those sites. Mossos refused the order.

The squad's director, Pere Soler, announced on his twitter account that the Mossos Squad "guarantees rights, it doesn't limit them."

The National Police and Civil Guard, under the command of the central government, have confiscated 100 ballot boxes and 2.5 million blank ballots to be used in the vote, BBC reported. This is in addition to the nearly 10 million ballots that police took last week from Catalan government buildings.

In addition, the Department of Aviation restricted airspace around Barcelona to small planes and helicopters starting Friday until October 2. This is frequently done for celebrations and major sporting events, and occurred most recently on September 2 during Catalonia's annual independence celebrations.

The Catalan independence referendum vote was announced September 6. Since then, Spain's government has threatened to arrest 700 Catalan mayors, closed down government websites, arrested 14 high-level Catalan officials and citizens organizing the vote. They also arrested two separatist organization leaders for sedition and deployed massive police forces to patrol the streets of Barcelona.

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