

# *Calatan's Puigdemont Suspends Independence in Favor of Dialogue*

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Barcelona, October 11 (RHC)-- Catalan President Carles Puigdemont has declared independence, but then suspended it in order to open up a dialogue with the Spanish government, which has said it will do whatever it takes to stop any secessionist moves. "I want to follow the people's will for Catalonia to become an independent state," he said to thundering applause, adding that he proposes a delay in the declaration.

"We propose to suspend the effect of the independence declaration ... in order to work towards putting into practice the result of the referendum ... Today, we are making a gesture of responsibility in favor of dialogue," the Catalan government leader said. Giving a history of the Catalan independence campaign, Puigdemont called for an easing of tensions and asked for the EU and other forces to assist in dialogue efforts with Madrid.

"We have been ready to talk and have dialogue ... We want to have a better understanding with Spain. The relationship hasn't been working for many years, and now it's unsustainable," he said. Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy had threatened the so-called "nuclear option" to revoke the autonomous status of the region, dissolve the Catalan government and hold new elections.

Rajoy and the Constitutional Court ordered 5,000 national police to patrol the region leading up to the October 1st independence referendum, a move that resulted in the use of excessive violent force against voters, injuring more than 900 citizens.

Catalan lawmakers have called on Rajoy to step down since he has proved “incapable of creating dialogue,” and is ultimately “responsible for the police actions on October 1st.” That day, 2.3 million citizens, or 43 percent of the Catalan population, cast their ballots. Of them, 90.18 percent favored a breakaway from Spain.

Spain’s Vice President Soraya Saenz de Santamaria said that if Catalan President Carles Puigdemont, “unilaterally declares independence,” as is expected, Madrid “will take actions.” The mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, who previously reached out to mayors across Europe requesting their support for dialogue between Barcelona and Madrid, continued to ask lawmakers to use “good sense” in managing the next steps regarding Catalan independence.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel encouraged Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to use dialogue to find a way out of the situation. And French European Affairs Minister Nathalie Loiseau said France would not recognize Catalonia as a separate state and neither would the European Union.

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