

# *Torrent Defends Puigdemont's Right to be Invested as President of Catalonia*

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Barcelona, January 25 (RHC)--The Speaker of the Catalan Parliament, Roger Torrent, has defended the "right" of independence leader, Carles Puigdemont, to be invested again as president of the autonomous Government of Catalonia, despite being in Belgium fleeing the persecution of Spanish authorities.

"Puigdemont has every right to be sworn in as president and we hope that it can be done with total normality," Torrent said, according to Telesur.

The speaker made it clear that his main objective is to have a "government that can govern" to prevent the central government from extending the application of Article 155 of the Constitution, which determines the intervention of the State in the autonomous region.

Puigdemont asked Madrid to guarantee the conditions so that he could be invested president, so that the mandate decided by the Catalan voters in the elections of December 21 is respected. In the elections, independence formations won an absolute majority in Parliament.

On Wednesday Torrent traveled to Brussels to meet Puigdemont, despite the fact that the Spanish government tried to prevent the meeting by closing the building of the Generalitat in the Belgian capital.

The Speaker of the Catalan Parliament said that, in his opinion, that decision amounted to a violation of "fundamental rights".

Meanwhile, Spain's Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria on Thursday said the government had taken a first step towards preventing the election of former Catalan leader at the head of the autonomous region.

The government has asked the council of state to give its opinion on the possibility to appeal to the constitutional court the Catalan parliament speaker's decision to nominate Puigdemont as only candidate for the vote, Saenz de Santamaria told a news conference.

If the council of state's opinion is positive, the appeal will be made immediately, she said.

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