

# *Catalonia's leader pledges not to stop independence movement*

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Perpignan, March 1 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of people Saturday gathered in Perpignan, France, to demonstrate their support for the independence of Catalonia and to demand the release of Catalan political prisoners.

One of the protagonists of this impressive rally was Catalonia's former President Carles Puigdemont, who has been in exile for the past ten years. "We will not stop and they will not stop us. We do not have to wait for better times because they are already here. The Catalan Republic is a majority objective within Catalan society," he said.

Besides summoning his compatriots to prepare for the final struggle to achieve independence, Puigdemont, who leads the Council for the Republic, emphasized the need to keep "the spirit of the 2017 pro-independence referendum" and create a network of grassroots organizations to achieve their common goals.

Catalonia's exiled leaders are persecuted by Spain's authorities who have sent extradition requests to European countries. In this situation is, for example, Toni Comin, the Catalan government's former Conseller of Health.

Referring to the Catalan independence referendum which was held on Oct. 1, 2017, Comin recalled that his countrymen voted mostly for the right to self-determination and warned that their decision must be respected.

"No one has given up. After so many years of exile and jail, we are stronger and braver."

During the Perpignan rally, attendees heard a politically emotional message sent by Oriol Junqueras, the president of the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) who remains in prison accused of rebellion and sedition. "We have to be more and more diverse," he said.???????

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