

CATALONIA IN A DE FACTO STATE OF EXCEPTION AFTER SPANISH ANTI-REFERENDUM OPERATION

The Spanish military police arrested 14 high-ranking government officials in their raid of government buildings, other offices and private homes on Wednesday morning

CATALONIA |
Latest report on repressions in Catalonia, 21 September 2017

Democracy is having a hard time in Catalonia these days. And the challenges Catalonia is facing have now led to a de facto state of exception. The Catalan home rule has now been suspended and Spain has taken over the country's finances.

As we have been informing this week, European values and civil rights are being violated by the Spanish government in Catalonia these days. Spain took the harassment to the next level on Wednesday morning. The threats about arresting government officials became a reality when the Spanish paramilitary police [Guardia Civil began entering government buildings](#)¹ such as the Catalan ministries of Economy, Governance and Social Affairs at around 8 am local time.

The Police officers entered a total of 22 buildings; most of them part of the Catalan government, including the Catalan Institute of Finances and the headquarters of the Telecommunications and IT Center. The Spanish paramilitary police also searched the foundation that manages the Catalan internet domains .cat. Dozens of domains have already been shut down these past ten days by the Spanish paramilitary police following orders from the judge. The raids were part of a big operation against the 1 October referendum. The Catalan Vice-Presidency and Economy Secretary General was one of the first people to be arrested, [along with 13 more high-ranking officials](#)².

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-politics-catalonia/spanish-police-raid-catalan-government-to-halt-banned-referendum-idUSKCN1BV0U0>

² <http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/spain-s-guardia-civil-raids-catalan-government-offices-in-big-anti-referendum-operation>

More arrests outside Barcelona

The Spanish anti-referendum operation was also carried out outside Barcelona. The manager of the Catalan government's IT development [was arrested in Madrid](#)³. According to the Spanish radio station *Cadena SER*, the Spanish military police also arrested a worker at the Consortium of Open Administration of Catalonia (AOC) for what seems to have to do with a pilot project of [electronic voting for the referendum](#)⁴.

“Totalitarian and anti-democratic attitude from Spain”

At noon just after the raids the Catalan president, [Carles Puigdemont](#)⁵, appeared before the press, he condemned and rejected “the totalitarian and anti-democratic attitude from Spain.” And he stated that the Catalan government considers the Spanish government's actions illegitimate. “They do not respect the elemental pillars of democracy,” he said. “The Spanish government has overstepped the red line that separated it from authoritarian and repressive regimes, and which has converted it into an embarrassment to democracy,” he stressed.

“Liberties and freedoms are being suppressed, there is a de facto state of exception in Catalonia,” he stressed saying that “what is happening in Catalonia does not happen anywhere else in the European Union. We do not accept going back to past eras,” he emphasized saying that the Spanish government “has violated the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.” He urged the citizens to “be ready to defend democracy and Catalonia next 1 October. We have a mandate from the citizens and the Catalan Parliament,” he concluded assuring that the Catalans will exercise their right to vote.

Crowds protesting peacefully

Thousands of people spontaneously began to gather in peaceful demonstrations defending the self-government and institutions of Catalonia upon the raids and arrests of government officials. Especially outside the Ministry of Economy people protested against Spanish police storming government buildings in an attempt to put a halt to the October 1 independence referendum. Around 40,000 people took part in the protest for more than 14 hours. The citizens attempted to peacefully hinder the Spanish military police Guardia Civil agents acting under the authority of Madrid's interior ministry. “We will vote,” people shouted, “our weapons are our ballot boxes,” as well as the famous slogan from the civil war “[No pasarán](#)⁶ (they shall not pass).”

³<http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-guardia-civil-entra-conselleria-economia-generalitat-20170920083442.html>

⁴<http://reusdigital.cat/noticies/reus/un-detingut-reus-loperatiu-policial-contra-11-o?platform=hootsuite>

⁵<http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/puigdemont-on-oct-1-we-are-called-to-defend-democracy-from-a-repressive-and-intimidating-regime>

⁶<http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/thousands-of-people-protest-guardia-civil-raids>

At Wednesday night, [demonstrations in favor of democracy](#)⁷ and against repression filled squares and avenues with citizens in around 30 Catalan cities; also Madrid and about 50 Spanish cities more took the streets in order to defend democratic freedoms and the right to decide.

International community's reaction

What happened in Catalonia made it to the international press all over the world and today on 21 September it also made it to several parliaments in Europe. The Catalan situation is to be discussed in the Irish Dáil and in the Belgian Federal Parliament, among others.

⁷ <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170921/431436137619/protestas-manifestaciones-guardia-civil-referendum-1o.html>