

# CATALAN INDEPENDENCE ON PAUSE IN ORDER TO DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS

**“The Government proposes that the Parliament suspends the effects of the declaration of independence so that in the coming weeks we may begin a dialogue without which it is impossible to arrive at an agreed solution,” said President Puigdemont in Catalonia’s Parliament. The suspended declaration was signed by a majority of the Members of Parliament after the session.**

REPORT | 10 October 2017

The President of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, appeared in Parliament on 10 October to officially present the results of Catalonia’s referendum. He noted that the results gave a democratic mandate to advance towards independence, stating that “the people have determined that Catalonia should become an independent state in the form of a republic”. However, he subsequently said that “the Government proposes that the Parliament suspends the effects of the declaration of independence so that in the coming weeks we can begin a dialogue without which it is impossible to arrive at an agreed solution.”

In this way the declaration of independence was [suspended straight away](#)<sup>1</sup> as a responsible measure to prevent further tension and any escalation of the ongoing crisis between Catalonia and Spain, along the lines of what many international counterparts suggested. “The current moment is serious enough for everyone to assume their corresponding responsibility and for the necessity to de-escalate tension and not to contribute to it, neither through word nor gesture,” said Puigdemont in Parliament on Tuesday night.

In his statement the Catalan president once again called for dialogue, and by putting Catalonia’s independence on pause he appealed for a peaceful solution to the crisis, making it very clear that dialogue and mediation is the only way forward. “If everybody acts responsibly, this conflict can be resolved [calmly](#)”<sup>2</sup>. It won’t be us that prevents that from happening,” he said. In this way, Puigdemont invited Spain’s Prime Minister Rajoy to take the next step.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-politics-catalonia/catalonia-baulks-at-formal-independence-declaration-to-allow-talks-idUSKBN1CF13W>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/catalonia-independence-spain-latest-news-updates-talks-referendum-region-a7993711.html>

With the suspension the Catalan government hopes that more time will facilitate dialogue with the Spanish government. Obviously this suspension has obvious political costs, especially among the Catalan voters who gave a majority to pro-independence parties in the September 2015 regional elections and who voted “yes” in the 1 October referendum, where some 900 peaceful citizens waiting in queues to vote were beaten by Spanish military police. Therefore, the suspension isn’t indefinite. And the Catalan government awaits a gesture from the Spanish government. Likewise, the Catalan government hopes that the international community which called for a gesture from Catalonia, will ask the same from the Spanish government.

This morning, in a [five minute statement](#)<sup>3</sup>, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, said the Spanish government was making a formal request for the Catalan president to clarify whether he officially declared independence or not.

“This requirement, prior to any of the measures that the government may adopt pursuant to Article 155 of our Constitution, is intended to provide citizens with the clarity and security required for such an important issue,” Rajoy said. This formal request is, in fact, the first step required for Spain to apply Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, which would effectively suspend home rule via Catalonia’s Statute of Autonomy. At the same time the prime minister made no reference to dialogue or to mediation during his appearance.

Pedro Sánchez, Secretary General of Spain’s Socialist party (PSOE), the main opposition in the Spanish parliament, also announced on Wednesday that he reached an agreement with the Prime Minister to launch a debate to in the Spanish Parliament during 2018 on how best to amend the current Spanish constitution. This is the first political gesture from PSOE for some time, but the agreement has not yet been confirmed by the governing Popular Party (PP).

In any case, it is unclear exactly what the goal of such a reform might be. This proposal would not be directed specifically at Catalonia, but would affect all of Spain’s 17 regions. Therefore, this proposal is insufficient to resolve the Catalan situation. Spain dilutes Catalonia in a multilateral negotiation instead of recognizing it as a party in a two-sided conflict.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that any changes to the Spanish constitution requires a 2/3 majority, followed by an early general election and a subsequent 2/3 majority of the newly elected parliament. And finally the changes would need to be put to a referendum voted on by all Spanish citizens.

[Full Official Statement](#)<sup>4</sup> by President Carles Puigdemont in the Catalan Parliament.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Paginas/2017/111017cmataluna.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres\\_gov/government/en/news/303583/official-statement-president-political-situation-catalonia.html](http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres_gov/government/en/news/303583/official-statement-president-political-situation-catalonia.html)