

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SPAIN

REPORT | 17 October 2017

The Prime Minister of Spain answered Catalonia's president's [letter](#)¹, which (once again) offered dialogue, by sending the leaders of two of the main pro-independence civil society grassroots organizations to prison without bail on [sedition charges](#)². In this way, Mariano Rajoy and the Spanish government have repeatedly ignored the [Catalan government's call for dialogue](#)³ with no conditions in order to de-escalate tensions between the two parts.

Instead of calming the situation, as the international community has repeatedly called for, the Spanish government escalated the conflict by activating Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to suspend Catalonia's home rule. On Monday night, Spain [signaled a hardening line](#)⁴ on Catalonia by jailing the Catalan National Assembly's (ANC) Jordi Sànchez and Òmnium's Jordi Cuixart accused of sedition. They are being investigated for a peaceful protest that took place on 20 September, at the end of which the two leaders called for calm among the crowds, who had gathered in front of different Catalan government ministries in Barcelona to protest the raids and arrests by Spanish police of [14 high-ranking officials](#)⁵. Prosecutors said that Sànchez and Cuixart played central roles in orchestrating these pro-independence protests.

Earlier on Monday, the head of Catalonia's regional police, Josep Lluís Trapero, was [released without passport](#)⁶ on sedition charges in relation to the October 1 self-determination referendum. Mr. Trapero is accused of being part of a strategic planning committee with the ultimate goal of declaring independence, along with the Catalan president and vice president, and leaders of pro-independence organizations. Mr. [Trapero](#)⁷ became popular amongst Catalan citizens for his adept handling of the August 2017 terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, when many called him a hero.

With the recent escalation of the crisis between Spain and Catalonia, Catalan society now asks the international figures who called for dialogue, and who have now seen the ongoing gestures made by the Catalan government to reduce tensions and seek this dialogue, to call for the same from the Spanish government. We are afraid that things might derail, which could even tragically lead to violence, if there is no movement from Madrid or from the international community.

The meeting of the European Council, where all EU heads of state or government will gather on Thursday and Friday of this week, could be the last chance to ask Prime Minister Rajoy to de-escalate the crisis before it is too late. The EU should be the first ones to remind its own members that beating up peaceful voters, closing websites and having political prisoners is not compatible with a modern democracy.

¹ <https://twitter.com/catalangov>

² <http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/pro-independence-grass-root-leaders-sent-to-prison-on-sedition-charges>

³ https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/16/world/europe/catalonia-spain-independence.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fworld&action=click&contentCollection=world®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=10&pgtype=sectionfront

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/17/madrid-jails-catalan-separatist-leaders-jordi-cuixart-and-jordi-sanchez-pending-investigation>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-politics-catalonia/spanish-police-raid-catalan-government-to-halt-banned-referendum-idUSKCN1BV0U0>

⁶ <http://catalannews.com/society-science/item/prosecutor-requests-catalan-police-chief-be-held-in-custody>

⁷ <http://catalannews.com/society-science/item/major-trapero-an-unlikely-hero>