



Catalonia Expected to Declare Independence 'Within Days', Spain Threatens Nuclear Option

Spain's King Felipe VI condemned organizers of Catalonia's independence referendum for having put themselves "outside the law" and he called for unity. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy may launch the "nuclear option", Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, to take direct control from the administration in Barcelona.

Hundreds of thousands of Catalans have gone on a general strike and Barcelona's roadways were blockaded in protest over over Spanish police violence during Sunday's vote, in which nearly 900 people were hurt. In Barcelona alone, 700,000 people took to the streets. Despite the King's warning, Catalan President Carles Puigdemont said the region will declare independence in a matter of days.

As reported previously, in a sternly worded address to the nation, Spain's King Felipe VI condemned organizers of Catalonia's independence referendum for having put themselves "outside the law" and said the situation in Spain was "extremely serious", calling for unity. In his address, King Felipe VI said Catalan leaders who organized the referendum showed their "disrespect to the powers of the state" adding that "they have broken the democratic principles of the rule

of law.

“Today, the Catalan society is fractured,” the king said, warning that the poll could put at risk the economy of the wealthy autonomous north-eastern region and the whole of Spain. He said that Catalonia’s authorities, “have placed themselves outside the law and democracy, they have tried to break the unity of Spain and national sovereignty”. Offering firm backing to the Spanish government of Mariano Rajoy, Felipe said it was the “responsibility of the legitimate powers of the state to ensure the constitutional order.”

Felipe also said the Catalan government had “systematically violated the law, demonstrating a disloyalty that is inadmissible” and “undermined the harmony and coexistence in Catalan society”

But he stressed that Spain “will overcome difficult times”.

The address came on the same day as Barcelona’s roadways were blockaded amid a general strike as hundreds of thousands in Catalonia have been protesting over Spanish police violence during Sunday’s vote, in which nearly 900 people were hurt.

However, despite the King’s warning and hinting that a showdown, potentially violent, is coming, Catalan President Carles Puigdemont told the BBC the region will declare independence in a matter of days. In his first interview since the referendum, Carles Puigdemont said his government would “act at the end of this week or the beginning of next”.

When asked what he would do if the Spanish government were to intervene and take control of Catalonia’s government, Puigdemont said it would be “an error which changes everything”.

As Bloomberg reported earlier, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has been fighting to maintain control after 2.3 million Catalans voted in Sunday’s makeshift referendum and the

regional police force ignored orders to prevent the ballot. Preparing for launching the “nuclear option”, Bloomberg added that Rajoy is mulling if, and when, to use Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to take direct control from the administration in Barcelona. This is the “error that would change everything” referred to by Puigdemont.

As a reminder, the Spanish government in Madrid has described the referendum as illegal. During the vote, 33 police officers were also injured, local medical officials said.

Meanwhile, as noted this morning, huge protest rallies have been taking place across Catalonia. In Barcelona alone, 700,000 people took to the streets, city police were quoted as saying by the AFP news agency.

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