



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 3, 2017

Spanish Government Uses Brutality to Quash Secession Bid

Spanish authorities have been using violence and intimidation to quash a powerful secession movement and what they call an illegal referendum in the Catalonia region of Spain. [Video footage](#) of Spain's national police force beating firefighters and even elderly voters, while trying to sabotage the election by seizing ballots, has gone viral worldwide. But despite the global outcry, and despite estimates suggesting that nine out of 10 votes supported secession, the Spanish government has made clear that it has no intention of allowing the Catalan people to declare independence. Now transnational authorities are getting involved.



The Catalan independence movement, with its centuries-old roots, has been growing in strength for many years. Centered around the city of Barcelona, the semi-autonomous region, complete with its own language, has long been known for its uneasy ties to the government in Madrid. Each year, it celebrates its own “national day,” known as Diada. And with the people of Catalan going to the polls on October 1 to vote on independence, the Spanish government apparently realized that, without firm action, its tax base was about to shrink dramatically. And so, as part of enforcing a court order declaring the referendum to be illegal, authorities resorted to using force.

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As the referendum was underway, national police, many wearing masks and riot gear, fired tear gas and rubber bullets at Catalan citizens. Even with TV cameras rolling, Spanish police could be seen beating voters with batons as they waited to cast their ballots. Local police and firefighters who tried to protect local citizens were also subjected to beatings in [scenes witnessed around the world](#). Almost a thousand people were said to be injured in the central government's crackdown. In addition to the violence, national authorities did everything possible to disrupt voting, even barging into polling places to steal ballot boxes and intimidate citizens. Thousands of national police were brought in to deal with the situation.

Still, despite the harsh tactics, according to Catalonia's government, 90 percent of those who voted in the “unauthorized” referendum supported Catalan independence from Spain. Just 8 percent of voters wanted to remain under the government in Madrid. In all, more than 2.25 million out of a total 5.3 millions voters went to the polls, meaning more than 42 percent of the electorate participated in the referendum. And if all goes according to plan, that overwhelming showing in favor of secession — in the face of violence from the central government — will pave the way for an upcoming, official declaration of independence for Catalonia.



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Commenting on the election results, Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont said the vote for secession meant that his region would soon be free from Madrid. “With this day of hope and suffering, the citizens of Catalonia have won the right to an independent state in the form of a republic,” Puigdemont said in a televised address following the referendum. “The unjustified, disproportionate and irresponsible violence of the Spanish state today has not only failed to stop Catalans’ desire to vote ... but has helped to clarify all the doubts we had to resolve today. Today the Spanish state wrote another shameful page in its history with Catalonia.”

From its [official Twitter account](#), the government of Catalonia has also been slamming Spanish authorities for “repression” and using violence against voters and protesters. “Catalonia’s emergency services have treated 38 people who have been injured as a result of the repression by Spanish police,” regional authorities said. A spokesman for the Catalan government blamed Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey for the violence by national police against Catalan voters. Local officials also urged “Europe’s institutions” to condemn the “violence” that “European citizens” are suffering from. Local trade unions vowed to strike to protest Spanish authorities’ hard line.

But Prime Minister Rajoy rejected the legitimacy of the referendum and defended actions by national police. “We did what we had to do,” he said, calling the referendum a “premeditated attack on the legality of the Spanish state faced down with serenity by the forces of order.” He also claimed “democracy won” because the Spanish Constitution was upheld. Other top Spanish officials said no declaration of independence would be recognized and that regional officials had no power to secede.

Among the lead drivers of the independence movement has been the enormous taxes seized by central authorities from the Catalan people. According to independence leaders, Madrid takes far more in taxes than it sends back to the region. Of course, the roots of the conflict go back hundreds of years, with the Catalan region being independent at various times in Iberian history. The recent video and pictures of the central government’s heavy-handed tactics to suppress the vote is likely to pour fuel on the fire of secession fever.

As *The New American* [reported from Spain two years ago](#), pro-independence activists, including local elected officials, have been taking major steps to separate themselves from central authorities in Madrid. Among the recent developments was an effort centered in Barcelona to create an alternative currency for the region. Leftist Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, one of the leading figures behind the currency effort, used social media to condemn Spanish police’s “violent actions” against a “defenseless people.” She also blasted Spanish leader Rajoy for hiding behind “judges, prosecutors and police to avoid finding a political solution.”

Outside of Spain, independence movements are gaining steam, too. As *The New American* documented in 2014, despite efforts by the globalist establishment to centralize coercive power at the national, regional, and even international [secession movements are emerging all over the world](#). In the Middle East, the Kurdish people — spread across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria — have long sought their own nation. Major steps in that direction have been occurring even in recent weeks. The United Kingdom, of course, famously [voted to secede from the unpopular and increasingly autocratic European Union in the “Brexit” election](#). And in Scotland, the effort to secede from the United Kingdom is also gaining momentum. Closer to home, even some U.S. states have been flirting with secession. And that just scratches the surface.

While the EU has so far remained largely silent on the crisis, the United Kingdom has weighed in. U.K. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson offered mild criticism of both sides. “Obviously we are very anxious



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about any violence,” Johnson said. “We hope that things will sort themselves out, though clearly you have to be sensitive to the constitutional proprieties. As I understand it the referendum is not legal, so there are difficulties.” Other U.K. politicians took varying positions, with some, especially in Scotland, more supportive of the independence movement than others.

U.S. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has expressed opposition to the secession movement. “I think Spain is a great country, and it should remain united,” Trump said at a press conference last week alongside Spanish Prime Minister Rajoy. Calling the idea of Catalonia’s secession “foolish,” Trump said that he supported a “united Spain.” Before those comments, the U.S. State Department had indicated that Washington was neutral on the issue.

The discredited UN “Human Rights Council,” which is [dominated by dictators and unfree regimes while regularly attacking the United States for its freedoms](#), also got involved. “I am very disturbed by the violence in Catalonia on Sunday,” [said](#) UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, [who is perhaps most infamous for persecuting a UN whistleblower who tried to stop the rape of African children by UN troops](#). “With hundreds of people reported injured, I urge the Spanish authorities to ensure thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all acts of violence. Police responses must at all times be proportionate and necessary.”

The UN’s Hussein, an Islamic prince who before the U.S. election equated Trump’s tactics and rhetoric with ISIS, also pushed for authorities to permit UN meddling in the region. “I firmly believe that the current situation should be resolved through political dialogue, with full respect for democratic freedoms,” he said. “I call on the Government of Spain to accept without delay the requests by relevant UN human rights experts to visit.” Of course, the UN’s “human rights experts” are widely considered to be a joke, with UN “experts” making absurd demands under the guise of the UN’s dangerous vision of “human rights” that is completely at odds with American traditions of God-given rights.

As a practical matter, assuming Catalonia does indeed become an independent state, the move is likely to have significant political effects. For one, the region is among the most left-leaning in Spain. That means Spain’s politics are likely to become more conservative, while Catalonia’s are likely to become more liberal. Because Catalonia is almost certain to seek EU membership, it will add another vote in favor of Big Government and EU power in Brussels. Either way, the emerging showdown between Spain and Catalonia does not concern America, so the U.S. government should stay out.

Photo of Spanish riot policeman swinging club against would-be voters in Barcelona, Spain: AP Images

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