

GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN

PRESS CONFERENCE

VICEPRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT

On behalf of the Government of Spain, I am speaking to you today to assess the situation created in Catalonia as a consequence of the decision by the Generalitat (the Regional Government of Catalonia) to persist in its determination to carry out an illegal referendum.

From the outset, this intention was illegal, undemocratic and contrary to normal standards of coexistence. Moreover, it is incompatible with our rule of law. Therefore, it could not take place and it has not taken place.

The rule of law has been applied, with firmness and proportionality, to frustrate all the plans and objectives of the Generalitat. Even before today, the events prepared did not provide the most basic, elementary guarantees of democratic procedure.

The instigators of the process turned a blind eye to all parliamentary rules, seeking to provide it with a semblance of legality. But this semblance was immediately cast aside. The subsequent implementation of the process is a matter of democratic shame, both for the Catalan people and for the entire Spanish population, who have seen their rights trampled on merely because they do not share the goal of independence.

The Generalitat (the Regional Government of Catalonia) decided to push forward with the referendum despite having no mandate to do so and although the rule of law had undercut its foundations: this 'referendum' had no authorised census, no legally-constituted election committees, no accredited polling stations and no overseeing body to corroborate the neutrality of the process.

The promoters were warned by international organisations that the procedure being employed was not appropriate. Mayors, councillors, public servants and journalists all denounced the undemocratic methods of which they were victims.

Despite the manifest unlawfulness of today's events and the judicial orders against them, the promoters refused to hold back. And, with no scruples at all, they decided to mobilise their supporters to push their agenda, even using children and the elderly for this purpose.

Today, following the latest actions by the judges, it was decided that the scant guidelines issued by the Generalitat itself should be changed. And in an action unprecedented in democratic society, less than an hour before the intended vote, the Generalitat dispatched the last vestigial resemblance to a legal referendum.

The Generalitat has behaved with absolute irresponsibility and has sought to invalidate the rule of law and justice in Catalonia. However, we have seen that the democratic rule of law does function and that it has mechanisms to ensure that judicial decisions are enforced. The absolute irresponsibility of the Generalitat has been overcome by the professionalism of the State Security Forces.

These Security Forces have carried out the orders issued by the courts and have acted with professionalism and in a proportional and proportionate manner. Their actions have never been directed against the people but against the materials intended for the referendum.

In this appearance before you all, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Security Forces in these difficult times. They have carried out their democratic duty, they have complied with judicial decisions and they have responded to calls for support from the Catalan regional police.

There has been no referendum or anything resembling one. It never made sense to take this irrational step, and it makes no sense to continue.

I call upon the Generalitat to abandon this irresponsible attitude and to accept, here and now, that what never was legal is, moreover, out of their reach. Continuing with this farce will get them nowhere. They should put an end to it immediately.

It is in their power to put an end to this situation. Nothing good can come from it.

For many weeks, the Catalan people and the Spanish population as a whole have been greatly concerned for their democracy. They have seen that certain elements wish to abandon centuries of shared coexistence, and decades of democratic stability. And that those who should be the first to uphold the law are, instead, boasting of disobeying it.

But Spain is a democracy. One that is consolidated and strong, where citizens' rights and freedoms are above the personal ambitions of politicians. Today, these citizens have seen their rights restored, their coexistence guaranteed and their freedoms protected.

And we shall continue to safeguard our democracy, our freedom and harmony among all citizens.