

# Catalonia: Widespread outcry in the hours following the imprisonments eight deposed Catalan ministers

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**Pots-and-pans protests and road cuts are first reactions to the court's decision to jail eight deposed Catalan ministers.**

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Some Catalan major civic organizations have called citizens to demonstrate on November 12 against the imprisonments of eight deposed Catalan ministers on Thursday. Yet, the first protests already took place in the immediate hours after the Spanish National Court took the decision. On Thursday evening, thousands of people took to the main squares of several Catalan towns and, at 10pm, loud pots-and-pans protests were held throughout the country. Thousands joined by clanging their kitchen utensils from their balconies and front doors.

On Friday morning eight roads were cut in the peak hours as a further protest against the judge's call. Even Barcelona's Gran Via, a major boulevard which crosses the whole Catalan capital, was blocked for about half an hour before 9am. At the same time, a Catalan railway service has been interrupted for 15 minutes because of a protest in the rails.

Even one of the most central roadways in Barcelona, Avenue Diagonal, was cut off in protest. Just before noon on Friday, hundreds of university students blocked the street in both directions. As well as impeding the circulation of vehicles, protesters also prevented the tram convoys from passing. Student demonstrators also cut off the entrance to the B-20 motorway for five minutes, causing significant blockage and delays.

Even the popular Catalan TV show Polònia, satirizing the current political situation in the country, went dark for one episode. On their twitter account, the television program posted a text with a black background stating: "Today there's no show. We don't feel like laughing."

In Girona, Carles Puigdemont's hometown, the locality decided to suspend one of its most attended events. La Copa, or barraques as it's known in Catalan, lasts a week and consists of outdoor concerts and festivities. The fair gave an explanation on its Twitter, writing "as a show of rejection against the incarceration of the government ministers, La Copa concerts have been suspended today."

Minor union Intersindical-CSC has also called for a general strike on November 8 in Catalonia as a response to the imprisonments. It is still unsure whether larger unions will also join.

## **Catalan News**

\* 03 November 2017 12:40 PM byACN | Barcelone:

<http://www.catalannews.com/society-science/item/widespread-outcry-in-catalonia-in-the-hours-following-the-imprisonments>

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It's now been 24 hours since Spanish justice sent 8 deposed Catalan ministers to prison without bail. And Madrid wants to make sure that Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and four others currently in exile in Brussels, also face the same fate. A European arrest warrant is even on the table. The Catalan conflict, which the EU keeps insisting is an internal matter of Spain, has been internationalized. Now, Belgian courts will have to decide what to do with the Catalan leader, and his ministers. Meanwhile, protests continue on the streets, here, while the Spanish government insists that judges in Spain are impartial.

\* 03 November 2017 08:39 PM byACN | Barcelona:

<http://www.catalannews.com/news/item/3-nov-17-tv-news-imprisonments-send-shockwave-through-catalonia>

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## **Lawyer alleges mistreatment of jailed ministers**

**Defense attorney for deposed officials to lodge complaint while released minister calls for political solution to "terrible" situation.**

The lawyer representing imprisoned Catalan ministers, Oriol Junqueras, Carles Mundó and Raül Romeva, says he will file a complaint over the conditions in which his clients were moved to the Estremera prison on Thursday. Lawyer Andreu van den Eynde says that the conditions in which his clients were moved were not "correct", although he did not give further details: "That is something they will have to say, and we will not make the mistake of saying anything before an official complaint has been lodged," he said on Friday.

In a press statement following a visit with his clients, Van der Eynde said that while the three deposed ministers are in "very tough" circumstances, all three are "well and composed". The lawyer also said they will appeal the judge's decision to hold the former ministers in custody. The lawyer spent more than an hour in the prison visiting his clients. "They are keen to know what we are doing and what we think, and they are eager for news about their families," he said.

Meanwhile, the one Catalan minister to avoid prison, Santi Vila, left the same Estremera prison after depositing bail of 50,000 euros. The former business minister had a message for Spain's political leaders, calling on them "to bring this terrible situation of imprisoned politicians to an end." Vila also appealed to Spanish president, Mariano Rajoy, and the heads of Congress and the Senate, Ana

Pastor and Pío García-Escudero, to take “the political initiative... because we will not resolve this in the courts.”

### **Video shows officers mocking the ministers**

As news of possible mistreatment of the ex-ministers became known, the *La Vanguardia* newspaper posted a video showing Spanish National police officers making fun of the ministers as they arrived at the National Court. “Wait till you see what they do to the little teddy bear,” says one police officer, referring to Junqueras. Along with an obscene gesture, the officer continues: “When they get him on all fours, they’ll fix his eye.” The conversation caught on video by the Reuters news agency was retweeted thousands of times. The National police reported on Twitter that it had opened an investigation into the video.

### **Catalan News**

\* 03 November 2017 07:30 PM by ACN | Barcelona:

<http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/lawyer-alleges-mistreatment-of-jailed-ministers>

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## **European Commission has “nothing” to say on jailed Catalan ministers**

**Brussels reiterates “full respect for constitution” but other European leaders speak out and condemn dismissed Catalan ministers’ imprisonment.**

The European Commission reiterated that it has “nothing” to say on the imprisonment of eight ministers of the government of Carles Puigdemont. At the daily press conference of the EC in Brussels, Spokeswoman Annika Breidhardt said that the possible European arrest warrant against the dismissed Catalan president is a matter for “judicial authorities”.

“We respect judicial authorities’ independence,” stated the spokeswoman of the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. She added that the EC cannot “interfere” or mediate in the conflict.

Breidhardt avoided responding about why Brussels condemns arrests in countries such as Venezuela or Turkey and not in Spain. Juncker’s spokeswoman also didn’t respond about whether the EC considers itself part of the solution or the problem regarding the Catalan question. Breidhardt reiterated that the EC “fully respects” the Spanish Constitution.

*“Jailing of elected leaders should be condemned by all democrats”*

Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, condemned the imprisonment of the dismissed Catalan vice president, Oriol Junqueras, and eight ministers. Sturgeon called for a political solution for the Catalan crisis.

“Regardless of opinion on Catalonia, the jailing of elected leaders is wrong and should be condemned by all democrats,” wrote the first minister on Twitter. According to Sturgeon, “the disagreement on Catalonia’s future is a political issue and it should be solved democratically, not by jailing political opponents.”

*"Regardless of opinion on Catalonia, the jailing of elected leaders is wrong and should be condemned by all democrats"*

*"Imprisonment doesn't solve anything, only escalates"*

The Green/ALE co-chair in the European Parliament, Ska Keller, stated on Twitter that the "imprisonment [of dismissed Catalan ministers and vice president] doesn't solve anything, only escalates." "When will Rajoy understand that this is a political crisis, not a judiciary one?," asked Keller.

### **"EU can no longer remain silent"**

The president of the European Free Alliance, François Alfonsi, said that "Catalonia deserves freedom" and called on the EU not to remain "silent." "If the EU doesn't protect European values, European democracy will decay", warned Alfonsi. "Are we ready to risk European democracy, European values, and human rights through loyalty to a Francoist party?," asked the former MEP.

In this regard, the president of the European Free Alliance called on "all democrats of Europe" and "all political groups" to act "now". In the same statement, he also expressed his solidarity with the dismissed Catalan ministers and vice president who were sent to prison. Alfonsi made a special mention of Raül Romeva and Oriol Junqueras, who are former MEPs. "I consider you my friends," he stated.

### **"It must be solved politically"**

The minister of the environment in Belgium, Christine Marghem, said in an interview that the Catalan crisis "must be solved politically and not judicially". In addition, Marghem stated that Belgium would not have encouraged those kinds of measures to solve "issues related to cultural and linguistic claims" because the "added value" of the country is its commitment to "political dialogue".

Nevertheless, Marghem said that the "legal context" of the dismissed Catalan president Carles Puigdemont is "based on elements of the Spanish democratic law", which must be "respected." "We must not intervene in the national sovereignty of a country and we must respect its constitution," she said.

### **"Democratic dialogue should be the way"**

Venezuela's Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Arreaza has called for the release of Catalan "political prisoners" and for "democratic dialogue" between Catalonia and Spain. Arreaza also expressed his "solidarity with the people of Catalonia" and asked the Spanish government "to respect the human and political rights of prisoners of conscience." "Democratic dialogue should be the way, not repression," said Venezuela's foreign minister.

"We demand that the Spanish authorities release the political prisoners," said Arreza on Twitter. "We express our solidarity with the people of Catalonia. We understand the anguish and the pain it is suffering in these difficult times," he added.

### **Jailing elected politicians is "reprehensible"**

The deputy head of the D66 party in the Dutch Parliament also condemned the imprisonment of the dismissed Catalan ministers. Kees Verhoeven said that jailing elected politicians is "reprehensible". "Whatever you think of Catalan independence, democratically elected politicians in cells is reprehensible," Verhoeven wrote on Twitter.

Imprisonment is “going too far”

The minister-president of Flanders, Geert Bourgeois, said that the imprisonment of the eight Catalan ministers and vice president is “going too far”. Bourgeois pointed out that the Catalan crisis is a political problem and therefore it requires “political solutions”, such as “dialogue and elections.”

Bourgeois is a member of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), the party that governs in coalition in Belgium’s federal government.

## **Catalan News**

\* 03 November 2017 03:33 PM byACN | Barcelona:

<http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/puigdemont-ready-to-run-in-december-21-elections-from-abroad>

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### **Puigdemont ready to run in December 21 elections from abroad**

**The deposed president has said he will turn himself in to “true justice” but “not to that of Spain”**

Carles Puigdemont has revealed this evening that he is willing to run in the December 21 elections called by the Spanish Government through Article 155. Indeed, Puigdemont is ready to do so even if it means presenting his candidature from abroad. In his interview with Belgian RTBF broadcaster, the deposed Catalan president affirmed that he is ready to turn himself in to the “true justice,” that is, that of Belgium, but “not to that of Spain.” However, Puigdemont has said that he is not “afraid” to speak with Spanish president Mariano Rajoy and that he’s still “ready to talk.”

Puigdemont also addressed the recent incarceration of the majority of his government, stating that “it’s not normal and it’s extremely barbaric” that democratically elected representatives face up to 30 years in prison. “You can’t speak of democracy if these are the rules of the game,” he observed.

“You can’t speak of democracy if these are the rules of the game”

During the interview, Puigdemont again said that he is still the leader of the “legitimate government” of Catalonia, the one that was “chosen” in elections “to serve the will of the Catalan people, one that’s been voided in a completely illegal way.” He also noted that he had demanded “some guarantees” of his Rajoy to make sure the elections happened in “normal conditions.” These guarantees included freeing the leaders of Òmnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly who are currently still in jail. Yet, his demands went unanswered.

Puigdemont further criticized that the Spanish government’s “concept of political dialogue” is to incarcerate the Catalan one. “Putting us in prison is not the solution, on the contrary,” he warned, adding that the Catalan independence movement has “never” been so strong.

The dismissed Catalan leader explained that the “only solution” to the Catalan situation is “dialogue.” Puigdemont also explained that he would be “very careful” with internal Belgian politics and that he is in the country due to the lack of “juridical guarantees” back in Spain.

In fact, just after the interview, the judge presiding over the hearing for the deposed Catalan ministers that are currently imprisoned demanded the arrest of Carles Puigdemont and his fellow dismissed ministers who are in the Belgian capital.

## **Catalan News**

\* 03 November 2017 08:13 PM byACN | Brussels:

<http://www.catalannews.com/politics/item/puigdemont-ready-to-run-in-december-21-elections-from-a-broad>

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### **Barcelona City Council demands the “immediate release” of all “political prisoners”**

**The entity supports the incarcerated “legitimate” government of Catalonia and rejects Spain’s “repressive escalation”**

The City Council of Barcelona held an extraordinary plenary session this Friday morning November 3. Called to address the issue of the recently incarcerated eight deposed Catalan government ministers, the plenary called for the “immediate” release of all “political prisoners.” They also expressed support for the ministers, which they consider the “legitimate” government of Catalonia.

The Barcelona City Council issued a statement, with the support of the ruling citizen platform Barcelona en Comú (Barcelona in Common, or BeC), the Democratic Party, the Republican Left, the far left CUP and the independent councilor Gerard Ardanuy. In the statement, the entities reject Spain’s “repressive escalation” in recent months. The document also defends that the eight prisoners “always” acted “peacefully and democratically, in accordance with the mandate that arose from the polls.”

The statement further calls for an “end to the judicialization of Catalan politics” and condemns “the arbitrary and partisan” ways in which the laws are being applied, “by perverting the separation of powers that any worthy Rule of Law must guarantee.”

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### **More than 20 media outlets in Catalonia condemn the ministers’ arrest and say country “won’t be silenced by repression”**

**In a manifesto, newspapers and journals demand the release of the “members of the legitimate government of Catalonia”**

More than 20 media outlets in Catalonia have written a joint manifesto condemning the imprisonment of the Catalan vice president and ministers and urging their immediate release. In the

text, they said that the arrests are “devastating” and remind citizens of “other dramatic events in our past.” The arrests and the “repression measures” of the Spanish government open a new “dark chapter” in history, they wrote. According to these media outlets, those imprisoned are “members of the legitimate government of Catalonia” and therefore should be immediately released.

“The Catalan nation won’t be silenced by repression,” they wrote. The papers also urged the international community to recognize that the “legitimate aspirations” of the Catalan people to decide their future “democratically” should be addressed. “Democratic and national rights should be defended in a civic and tolerant way,” they said.

The media outlets urge to re-instate the “legitimate” Catalan government and Parliament, dissolved by the Spanish executive, and demand an end to all the judicial procedures against pro-independence politicians, mayors that collaborated in the referendum or citizens. Moreover, according to the papers, Catalonia should not see ever again violence such as that of the October 1, when Spanish riot police officers injured more than 900 people.

The papers signing the manifesto are so far ‘El Nacional’, ‘El Punt Avui’, ‘Diari Ara’, ‘Nació Digital’, ‘Vilaweb’, ‘Directe’, ‘El Temps’, ‘Racó Català’, ‘El Vallenc’, ‘Nova Conca’, ‘Revista Esguard’, ‘L’Opció’, ‘Sàpiens’, ‘Descobrir’, ‘Enderrock’, ‘Bonart’, ‘El Món’, ‘Tot Sant Cugat’, ‘Tot Cerdanyola’, ‘Tot Rubí’, ‘El Món Terrassa’ and ‘Revista Mirall’.

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## **The imprisonments are a ‘very serious attack on democracy,’ Puigdemont says**

**He demands, as “legitimate” president, the release of the vice president, the ministers, and an end to the “repression”**

Dismissed president Carles Puigdemont said in a televised speech that the jailing of his government is a “coup against the December 21 elections,” referring to the upcoming snap elections called by the Spanish government. The imprisonments were also described by Puigdemont as “a very serious attack on democracy.”

According to Puigdemont, the jailing of Catalan ministers today shows that the upcoming December elections “will be developed in a climate of repression and imprisonment,” in what he described as an “unprecedented situation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe.” Puigdemont, as a “legitimate” president, he said, has demanded “the liberation of the ministers and the vice president” and the “end of political repression.”

He also warned Catalans that “a long and fierce repression awaits” and he stated that the “fury” of the Spanish government has become “runaway” and that it’s “threatening everything.” Puigdemont, for this reason, called for his audience “to fight it” the Catalan way, “without violence, with peace and with respect for all opinions and people.”

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