

Catalonian Parliament Postpones Election of Regional President Until Further Notice



Madrid, January 30 (RHC--Agencies)-- Catalonia on Tuesday postponed the election of a new regional president until further notice after Spain's highest court said the sole nominee, separatist leader Carles Puigdemont, was ineligible while he remains a fugitive from justice in Belgium.

Catalonia's independence drive has sparked clashes with the Spanish government and judiciary, which say that any vote or move toward secession from Spain is unconstitutional.

The speaker of the house, Roger Torrent, gave no reason for the postponement but said he would not nominate an alternative candidate. Separatists have a majority in the regional assembly and Puigdemont would almost certainly win the vote.

Their decision to stick with Puigdemont suggests they will continue to push for secession, giving the national government in Madrid no reason to end the direct control that it imposed to block the independence drive.

“Today’s session has been postponed, but under no circumstance canceled ... another candidate will not be presented,” Torrent said during a snap news conference.

The Constitutional Court said on Saturday that Puigdemont could not be elected unless he was physically present in the parliament, with a judge’s permission to attend.

If he returns to Spain, Puigdemont faces the prospect of arrest for leading an illegal independence bid. He has said he can lead Catalonia from abroad, and on Monday ruled out seeking a judge’s permission to attend the parliament in person.

Puigdemont fled to Brussels following an illegal referendum on independence on Oct. 1. The Catalan parliament issued a declaration of independence, also ruled illegal, on Oct. 27.

Various regional cabinet members are in jail awaiting trial on charges of sedition, rebellion and misappropriation of funds for their role in organizing the vote and the independence declaration.

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