

On Monday, the Spanish supreme court declined to reactivate an international arrest warrant that would have allowed for the detainment of Carles Puigdemont as he travelled to Denmark to speak at a conference, according to the Guardian. Puigdemont, the former president of Catalonia, fled Spain last October after the Spanish parliament voted to invoke Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, and dissolved the Catalan regional government.

This, of course, was in response to the Catalan attempts to secede from Spain. It began with the referendum for independence in early October. Declared illegal by the federal government, the region nevertheless carried through with the contentious vote, despite the attempts of the national police to stop it. The results were decisive: over 92% of people polled voted to secede. As reported by the BBC, however, there was pushback as anti-secession forces quickly pointed out that fewer than 43% of Catalonians had voted and further claimed that there were various irregularities in the voting process that made it suspect.

Days later, Puigdemont, then still president, gave a speech in parliament in which he asked for a suspension of the efforts to secede while lines of communication were opened with the federal government. According to the New York Times, this left both pro- and anti-separatists rather nonplussed, a state of confusion which persisted until late October when the Catalan parliament voted 70 to 10 to declare independence. As noted by Al Jazeera, members of the right-wing parties *Ciudadanos* and *Partido Popular*, and center-left *Partido Socialista de Catalunya* left before the vote in protest, leaving 55 seats unfilled during the process.

The same day, the Spanish parliament invoked Article 155, which gives the government the authority to, quote, “take all measures necessary” to ensure that regional governments fulfill their obligations as laid out by the Spanish constitution. Mariano Rajoy, the current Spanish Prime Minister, used these powers to dissolve the parliament, suspend several officials in the government, and call for new elections on the 21st of December. It was in the following week that Carles Puigdemont and four of his ministers left Spain for Belgium hours before the Spanish Attorney General said he would pursue charges against them and other separatist Catalan ministers. According to the Guardian, several other ministers were later taken into custody while they were investigated for “sedition, rebellion, and misuse of public funds.” Six of the nine ministers were later released, but four remain in custody. Spanish courts also issued the warrant mentioned at the top of this report for Puigdemont and his ministers, but deactivated it after Belgian courts refused to extradite the group.

The election ordered by Prime Minister Rajoy occurred as planned, and resulted in a major win for the pro-secession forces. With voter turnout upwards of 80%, 70 of the 135 seats were won by one of the three pro-Independence parties; two of the three—Together for Catalonia and the Catalan Republican Left—later cut a deal in order to form a coalition government.

At nearly the same time that Spain was attempting to reactivate their international warrant on Monday, the coalition government officially nominated Puigdemont to another term as president of the Catalan assembly. Because Puigdemont would be arrested as soon as he steps foot on Spanish soil, notes NPR, he would have to govern in exile, communicating through video links and intermediaries. Before this nomination, however, Prime Minister Rajoy had said that Puigdemont cannot govern from abroad, and that Rajoy would not return full autonomy to Catalonia were they to try. More is sure to come from this developing situation.

This has been Cameron Lallana with International News.