

IF SCOTLAND WAS CATALONIA

If Scotland was Catalonia, this would be happening now

Scotland is under direct rule from Westminster.

Eight senior MSPs and the leader of the Yes campaign are in prison in London, so far without trial. Some have been held for six months. One has contracted tuberculosis.

Nicola Sturgeon and six other MSPs are effectively in exile. They will be arrested if they ever return. Most are wanted for treason for organizing an independence referendum, and face 30 years in jail.

How did we get here?

After years of Scottish demands for a referendum on independence, and years of refusals from London, an SNP government was elected on a mandate to hold one. Westminster claimed it would be illegal; Holyrood cited **the right of any people to decide who governs them**. Although views on independence were split, 80% of Scots wanted a referendum. The date was set for 1 October 2017.

The Tory government in London reacted furiously. 6,000 armed police were sent to Scotland. And images of **unprovoked police brutality** on referendum day shocked the world.

Riot police baton-charged entirely peaceful crowds on the streets of Glasgow and Edinburgh. They threw voters downstairs, dragged women out of polling stations by the hair, shoved pensioners, beat people with hands raised in surrender, and attacked firemen who had stepped in to protect voters from the police. Hundreds were injured. **One man lost an eye, shot by police in Edinburgh.** Police in balaclavas forced their way into polling stations and pulled ballot boxes from the hands of election officials.

Despite all this, 43% of the electorate succeeded in voting, with a strong win for Yes.

The UK government then turned from violence to legal force. **Its response to a pacifist mass movement was to lock its leaders in cages.**

The jailings began within days. Almost all the last Scottish cabinet are now in exile or prison. Most are charged with treason, a crime that requires violence—but the only violence was inflicted by police on voters. The Tories are now

spreading the lie that the independence movement is violent, absurdly stretching the meaning of ‘violence’ to include peaceful demonstrations. The grassroots movement of nonviolent protests, strikes and civil disobedience is being smeared as ‘terrorism’.

The chief of Police Scotland, whose officers kept the peace on referendum day without resorting to violence, was **sacked and charged with sedition**. But not one of the English police who assaulted voters has been prosecuted.

The Council of Europe has warned England over perceived **lack of judicial independence**. The UN urged England to drop treason charges against democratically elected officials and demanded that their political rights be respected. Switzerland, now home to two of the wanted MSPs, rejected extradition requests as ‘political’.

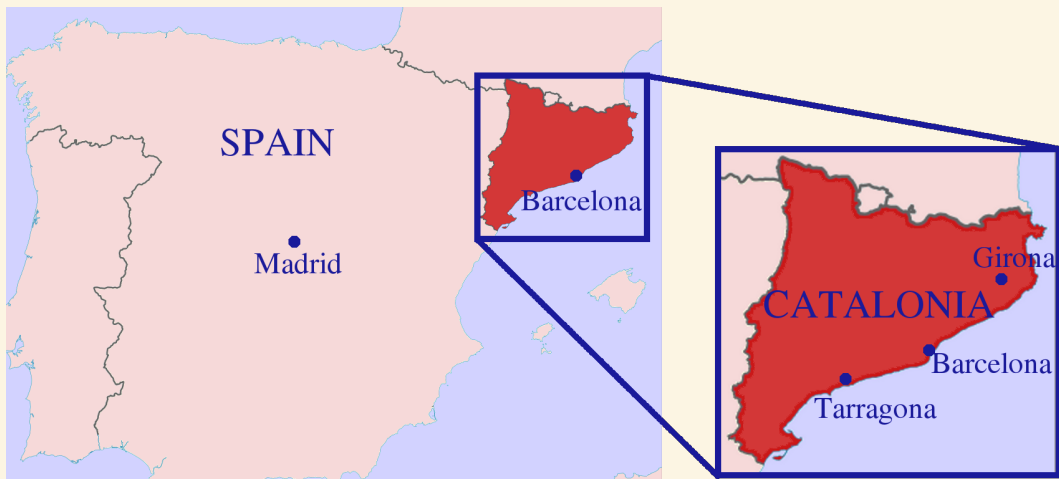
After the Yes vote, Holyrood stated that independence would be declared, and Westminster responded by **imposing direct rule**. Hoping to dislodge the pro-independence majority, Theresa May called fresh Scottish elections for December 2017. But the pro-independence parties kept their majority, and the Tories lost half their seats.

Frustrated, May’s government refused to respect the results. **All three of Holyrood’s top choices for First Minister have been jailed or forced into exile.** One was jailed just two days after being nominated. To this day, the Tories are doing everything they can to stop Scotland’s democratically elected representatives from forming a government.

All of this is true when ‘Scotland’ is replaced by ‘Catalonia’, ‘UK’ by ‘Spain’, ‘Edinburgh’ by ‘Barcelona’, etc.

This is not about independence. It is about the Catalan people’s right to decide who governs them. It is about freedom of expression. **It is about democracy.**

About Catalonia



- Catalonia's population is comparable to Scotland's. At 7 million, it makes up one-sixth of Spain.
- The Catalan language has as many native speakers as Danish or Norwegian. Everyone who grows up in Catalonia is bilingual in Catalan and Spanish. But until the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975, Catalan was banned from official use, and publishing in Catalan was effectively outlawed.
- The Catalan independence movement is not anti-Spanish, any more than the Scottish movement is anti-English. Indeed, many Catalans have parents or grandparents from other parts of Spain.
- Opinion polls and election results suggest that about half the population supports independence and half is against. But without a properly conducted referendum, free from police brutality and intimidation, it is impossible to know. A 2017 poll found that 82% of Catalonia wanted an official referendum to be agreed between Barcelona and Madrid.
- Many Catalans who are against independence are nevertheless horrified at Madrid's treatment of pro-independence leaders. The Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, is not in favour of independence but has spoken out strongly against the attacks on democracy, calling for the immediate release of all the political prisoners.

A nation that jails democratically elected politicians who are carrying out their electoral mandate forfeits the right to call itself a democracy. —Peter Tatchell

