

## Respect Spanish democracy: the lies of Puigdemont

The Washington Post published last Friday a very admirable article by president of the regional Government of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont: there is nothing, absolutely nothing true in it. Puigdemont says Catalonia will exercise its right of self-determination on next October 1st. That right applies to former colonies or regions under a dictatorial regime. This is not the case in Catalonia, where more than 30 democratic elections have been held in 40 years. In fact, he is president of Catalonia in accordance with the norms of Spanish democracy.

Puigdemont justifies the referendum because the secessionists parties won the last regional elections. He forgets to mention that the Spanish Constitution establishes —as the vast majority of democratic constitutions—, that sovereignty resides in all the citizens of the country: that is, in all Spanish citizens. In other words, when speaking of the right to self-determination, he is talking about taking away from the Spanish people the right to decide on the whole of their country. Nor does he mention that his referendum was approved by violating the rules of his own autonomous parliament, silencing the opposition and ignoring the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Spain, which has declared it illegal. It is right to call it a coup d'état.

There is no authoritarian repression of which Puigdemont speaks. Judges and police are acting to prevent the illegal referendum. He knows that laws are being broken and he still pretends to be scandalized when the State acts. The answer is completely appropriate. If there are incidents they are due to the harassment of the followers of Puigdemont to mayors, policemen and citizens who reject the independence and the referendum.

When Puigdemont compares Spain to Maduro's Venezuela it is impossible to avoid laughter. It is himself who has silenced the opposition in the autonomous parliament of Catalonia. It is himself who ignores the Constitution and the laws in place. It is himself who has the support of the radical left Chavez court: the CUP. The mention of the Barcelona bombing is especially disgusting. From the beginning, the secessionists manipulated the attack in their favour. They transformed the demonstration after the attacks in an act against the king of Spain and against the Government. They insulted the memory of the victims. To suggest that the Spanish police has forgotten about jihadism for acting against the coup d'état that it is perpetrating is grotesque.

The alleged attacks on freedom of expression and civil rights by the Spanish State do not exist. Since the referendum is illegal, the Government has an obligation to prevent it from being carried out: that is why webs that announce it have been closed down and the advertisements have been banned. If someone's rights and freedoms are jeopardized, they are those of the mayors who have announced they will comply with the law and will not collaborate in the illegal referendum: they are undergoing a campaign of harassment without the support or help of Puigdemont.

To speak of a state of siege in Catalonia, as Puigdemont does, is to insult the memory of Sarajevo and the citizens who really suffered a state of siege. The government has taken control of the finances of Catalonia to avoid that a coup is paid with public money and all the obligations of payment to the civil servants and the public services will be fulfilled. To pretend otherwise is to lie on very sensitive issues. The only thing that is going to happen is that, until Puigdemont stops his coup attempt, the payments will come from an account of the Central Administration instead of the regional administration.

Puigdemont insists on linking current Spain with dictator Franco. Spain is an advanced democracy that has given Catalonia one of the highest levels of self-government in the world. It was one of the agreements of the Spanish transition: a great autonomy in exchange for constitutional loyalty. The Spanish State has done its part. Secessionists are the disloyal. Puigdemont and his allies say nothing but lies. They are not innocent lies: they are loaded with supremacism and xenophobia against the rest of Spaniards who, unfortunately, are not really known out of our country. When he says that this is a battle between freedom and authoritarianism I cannot agree more. He represents the authoritarianism that tries to steal from all the Spaniards the right to decide on their own country.

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