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Irish PM calls for dialogue in Catalonia

EFA MEP Jordi Solé asks Ireland's PM about the situation in Catalonia

Ireland's Prime Minister has called for dialogue between the Spanish government and Catalonia following recent elections which saw a pro-independence majority elected.

The Taoiseach was in Strasbourg to deliver a keynote speech on the future of Europe to the European Parliament and hold a debate with MEPs.

His call for dialogue was in response to a question from Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya MEP **Jordi Solé**. The MEP spoke of the violence used by Spanish police towards peaceful Catalan voters and the threats to rights and democracy with Spain having imprisoned and forced into exile democratically elected pro-independence politicians.

Solé asked: *"How do you see a European Union where honest politicians are sent to jail or forced into exile simply for fulfilling their democratic mandate? How do you see a European Union where peaceful people are beaten by police just because they want to vote and exercise a basic right? How do you see a European Union that looks the other way when it comes to human rights and democracy within its borders?"*

Ireland's Taoiseach **Leo Varadkar** replied: *"On Catalonia, I think the only solution is dialogue and I hope that the central government in Madrid will engage in dialogue with the new government in Catalonia."*

Catalonia voted for independence from Spain in a referendum held on 1 October 2017 which was marred by brutal police violence against peaceful voters.

Spain subsequently took direct control of Catalonia, suspending its autonomy and imprisoning several peaceful democratically elected politicians and civil society leaders. The Catalan President and several ministers were forced into exile. Despite the crackdown, pro-independence parties again won a majority at fresh elections held on 21 December.

Catalan Vice President and former MEP Oriol Junqueras was re-elected but Spain continues to hold him and others in custody, thus preventing them from taking their seats in Parliament. The Catalan President was also re-elected to Parliament but has been threatened with arrest if he returns from exile.

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Responsible MEPs



Jordi Solé i Ferrando

Member

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