

EUROPE

Catalonia Protests Roll Into a Second Day

Separatist supporters take to streets to protest jail sentences meted out over 2017 independence referendum



Protesters clash with Catalan regional police during a protest in front of the Spanish government delegations in Barcelona on Tuesday. PHOTO: LLUIS GENE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By Giovanni Legorano and Pietro Lombardi

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BARCELONA—Thousands of pro-independence protesters took to the streets of Catalonia, in a second day of tumult over the jail sentences given by Spain's highest court to nine Catalan separatists for their role in the region's illegal independence referendum in 2017.

Police on Tuesday clashed with protesters in Barcelona and other Catalan towns, after mostly peaceful gatherings and marches turned partly violent. Some separatist protesters threw cans, bottles and other objects at the police, who charged them with batons. Some demonstrators also set fire to garbage bins in parts of central Barcelona.

Catalonia's regional government blamed small groups of violent protesters, who, it said, infiltrated what were intended to be peaceful demonstrations organized by two separatist organizations, Òmnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly. The leaders of the two groups, Jordi Sànchez and Jordi Cuixart, were among those sentenced to jail on Monday, together with seven secessionist politicians.

“There surely is a group of organized people who tarnish and damage the image of the pro-independence movement,” said Meritxell Budó, spokeswoman of the Generalitat, Catalonia’s regional government, in comments broadcast on Spanish national television.



Protesters set fire to barricades on Barcelona’s streets on Tuesday. PHOTO: MATTHIAS OESTERLE/ZUMA PRESS

Protests have been taking place across the northeastern region since Monday morning, when Spain’s highest court

sentenced the nine leaders to jail terms of between nine and 13 years.

Hundreds of protesters marched toward Barcelona’s airport on Monday and blocked roads and train tracks across the region, in an apparent echo of tactics used by protesters in Hong Kong. Their actions forced the airport to cancel more than 100 flights on Monday and roughly another 40 on Tuesday.

Separatist groups are organizing more protests and street marches for the following days, in particular in conjunction with a regionwide strike that some trade unions called for Friday.

“The situation has got to a point of no return. Our patience is over,” said Aleix Martínez, a 24-year-old graduate in physics. “The only way they’ll let us vote on our future is to hit the economy.”

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