

Answers to Questions

Political Repercussions in the Province of Catalonia!

(Translated)

Question:

BBC reported the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's office, today (19/10/2017), as saying: "the cabinet would meet to activate Article 155 of the constitution, allowing it to take over running of the region.... The head of the Catalan government, Carles Puigdemont, had sent a letter to the Spanish government, threatening that the Parliament of the region will approve the referendum on the independence from Spain if Madrid continues to block dialogue and continues its repression." After the referendum of 1/10/2017, the President of the region had announced on 10/10/2017 before the region's Parliament the secession from Spain, but made the implementation of it open to dialogue. So, why did the region conduct this referendum despite the opposition of the Spanish state; its king, its government and its constitutional court? What is the international position towards it? And what is the possibility of implementing the independence of Catalonia? Jazakum Allah Khairan.

Answer:

For the picture to be clear and to find the most correct answer to the question, we will review the reality of Catalonia, its pre-secession movements, and then the latest referendum. Next, we will mention the international position towards it, and thereafter, we will examine the possibility of implementing this referendum:

First: The historical and geographical reality of Catalonia:

The region is located northeast of Spain with an area of 32.1 thousand square km, that is 8% of Spain, with Barcelona as its capital. It comprises of four provinces, namely: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona, and a population of 7.5 million, accounting for 16 percent of the population of Spain which consists of 17 autonomous regions in the country.

Islam has enlightened Catalonia since the year 95 AH during the Islamic conquests of Andalusia. When the Islamic rule ended, the region continued to be an independent entity, then Spain annexed it forcibly in 1714 CE. The people of the province did not accept it and remained struggling to get rid of the Spanish occupation. In the 1930s, a civil war broke out between the central government and its self-governing ally of Catalonia as a party and the Franco-Army as the other. After the latter's victory, Franco harassed the Catalans, prevented their language from being an official language in the region, banned Schools from teaching Catalan, and denied the Catalan identity. After the fall of the oppressive Franco-led regime, a popular referendum was held with a 30% vote in favor of the Spanish constitution which provides for the unity of the country and the right of self-government of the nationalities, minorities and provinces of Spain. In 1979, the Catalan people once again gained the right to self-government, and that resulted in the recognition of the Spanish and the Catalan languages as official languages in the region. After that, the Catalan separatist movements calmed down until the beginning of this century as the movements began gradually to escalate.

Second: The Stages of Modern Catalan Movements:

1. These movements began in 2006 with the approval of a new law of self-government and was voted by the people in order to expand the powers of self-rule to the region. The law redefined Catalonia as a nation. In 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court repealed this law which led to demonstrations under the slogan "We are a nation, we decide." In November 2012, a symbolic

independence referendum was held in which 37% of the citizens of the region participated and voted for independence from the Spanish state. In January 2015, Catalonia Prime Minister, Artur Mas, announced holding a snap election of a referendum nature in September of the same year. The early elections were held and the nationalist movement calling for secession won a majority of 72 seats to 63 for secession opposition parties. The parliamentary majority was able in November 2015 to issue a bill that declares the initiation of "Catalonia's process towards an independent state". The Spanish government appealed the bill to the Constitutional Court which accepted the appeal.

2. On 9/6/2017, where these moves took a more vigorous and stronger direction, the President of the Catalonia Government, Carles, announced on 9/6/2017 that "a referendum on the independence of the region from Spain will take place on 1/10/2017 and that the government will put in this referendum the following question: "Do you want Catalonia to become an independent state in the form of a republic?" (Novosti, 9/6/2017). The following day, the Spanish government announced that it would obstruct any attempt for the independence of Catalonia. On 6/9/2017, the Catalan Parliament passed a law setting out the basis of the referendum on the region independence from the Spanish state. The Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, said: "The Spanish government could use its constitutional powers to suspend Catalonia's autonomy and prevent the region from splitting from Spain". The Spanish Constitution court replied on 8/9/2017 to suspend the referendum until it rules upon its constitutionality.

3. However, the referendum was held as scheduled on October 1, 2017. The result was that 90% of the voters, 43% of the population, wanted separation from Spain and independence. The King of Spain, Philippe VI, delivered a speech on October 3, 2017 after the referendum, calling it "illegal and undemocratic", but the regional governor said: "He will declare independence this weekend or the beginning of next week." He said: The king had rejected a moderating role granted to him by the Spanish constitution "(BBC 3/10/2017). It appears that Spain has become embarrassed. It could not prevent the referendum process, so it has carried out acts to obstruct it that led to the injury of 893 as a result of clashes between the security forces and the voters. This has aroused public opinion against it, and was therefore looking for other ways to obstruct the declaration of independence. So, it began to use economic warfare against the region; major financial institutions and companies announced their exit from Catalonia, and the third largest Spanish bank CaixaBank announced on 6/10/2017 its decision to move its head office outside Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. On 8/10/2017, Spain took to the streets hundreds of thousands of opponents to the independence in Barcelona to create a popular opposition momentum within Catalonia.

4. Catalonia's regional president, Carles, declared before the parliament on 10 October 2017, the independence of the province of Catalonia but postponed its implementation. He said: "I assume the mandate of the people for Catalonia to become an independent state in the shape of a republic, I ask Parliament to suspend the effects of the declaration of independence to be suspended for a few weeks to open a period of dialogue." However, he did not reach the extent to support the Parliament for the Declaration of Independence. (Euro News, Reuters 10/10/2017). This means that he didn't want to embarrass himself by announcing the secession because he knows that achieving this is not easy. So, he left the door open for negotiation with the Spanish state to avoid collisions with it. The region, thus, remains within Spain, but the problem of the region remains alive and hangs on Spain and the European Union until conditions become favorable and independence can be achieved.

Third: The international position on the events of Catalonia. Here, we will mention the positions of the influential countries, i.e., the European Union and the United State, as well as the position of the United Nations as being strongly influenced by the American position:

1. The European position was clearly against the referendum and the independence of Catalonia. Germany, France and the European Union supported the position of the Spanish government. Germany's Deputy Foreign Minister said that: "developments in Catalonia were worrying and separatism was not the answer. Separatism doesn't solve any problems. All EU members should respect and strictly adhere to the principles and rules of the rule of law and democracy... political conflicts in the European Union should be solved via dialogue rather than with violence on the streets. " (Reuters, 2/10/2017). France has announced its position through its European Affairs Minister, Nathalie Loiseau, that "France will not recognize Catalonia if the Spanish region unilaterally declares independence... If independence were to be recognized - which is not something that's being discussed - the most immediate consequence would be that (Catalonia) automatically left the European Union" (Reuters, 9/10/2017). European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, announced the union's stance as "demanding to respect the decisions of the Spanish government and its constitutional court." While European Council President, Donald Tusk, wrote on Twitter on 2/10/2017, saying: "Sharing his (Spain's Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy) constitutional arguments, I appealed for finding ways to avoid further escalation and use of force."

2. As for the American position, it shows that the government of Catalonia and its president have been encouraged and supported by America. U.S. Department of State spokesperson, Heather Nauert, stated: "The United States considers the referendum as an internal affair of Spain and we would not want to interfere. We will let the government and the people there work it out, and we will work with whatever government or entity that comes out of it "(the Egyptian Al-Fajr, 16/9/2017). This last sentence is considered to be an American endorsement of the referendum and independence. Because it says: "we will work with whatever government or entity that comes out of it"; that is, we will recognize the region of Catalonia if it can achieve independence. The Spanish newspaper "El País" stated that " the president of the Catalan region, Carles Puigdemont, considered the statements of the American spokeswoman to mean that America respects the will of the Catalan people and the outcome of the referendum." since it is known that America is aimed at dismantling the European Union as it announced its support for Britain's exit from the Union and encourage such in other European countries, or at least want to occupy it with its internal affairs and separatist movements so that the Union or its major countries do not compete with America on international issues or disrupt it. Thus, encouraging such separatist movements is in its interest. And this position contrasts with its position about the referendum of Kurdistan and its independence which it strongly opposed and rejected and moved the countries of the region from Iraq to Iran and Turkey to oppose and reject it and to pressure on Barzani because this is not in its interest at present, especially as it is the influential power in Iraq. Britain is the one that instructed its agent Barzani to carry out this step to disrupt America and to bargain this with lifting the US sanctions applied by Saudi Arabia and Egypt on Qatar which is a British agent.

3. As for the position of the United Nations, which is dominated by America, its position in relation to the subject of Catalonia has been encouraging the independence. Its Secretary-General, Antonios Guterich, expressed the "hope that the democratic institutions of Spain will find a solution to the crisis between Catalan separatists and the national government." Spokesman for the president of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly stressed that "the right of peoples to self-determination is a fundamental right, while pointing to the need to apply this right without violating the principle of the territorial integrity of the country and through the agreement between the parties concerned" (Associated Press, 3/10/2017). This indicates that the United Nations promotes Catalonia independence while it opposed the referendum of the Kurdistan region and its independence because of the American hegemony on the resolution at the United Nations.

It is clear from these positions that the recent movements of Catalonia in the subject of the referendum have been encouraged by America because America is interested in

disturbing the atmosphere in Europe, especially in the era of Trump, and what makes this view preponderant is the above-mentioned positions and statements.

Fourth: the possibility of implementing this separation:

This is not easy to happen at least in the foreseeable future, and there is no doubt that America realizes it, and its encouragement for the Catalan movements is to disturb the atmosphere in Europe and to preoccupy it with itself as preliminary steps for the long-term dismantling of the European Union. Moreover, there are other reasons that make Spain unable to accept the secession of Catalonia in any way for two main reasons:

1. This region, despite its small size, produces 20% of Spain's gross national product (GNP), controls 70% of the transport and communications traffic related to Spain's foreign trade and produces one third of the Spanish industry, which is why the Catalanian population believes that they are giving more than what they receive. And the Spanish government imposes high taxes on them that reached 10% of the region's produce; all of these reinforce the cries and the tendencies of independence. On the other hand, Spain suffers from economic problems, a weak public budget, a high budget deficit and an increase in the unemployment rate, in addition to its austerity measures. The Catalan economy is a key element in solving these economic problems.

2. Moreover, the separatism of Catalonia leads to successive secessions in Spain and in other places because the independence of Catalonia will be an encouragement for the Spanish Basque Country which has sought independence before. The Basque Country has supported the Catalonia step, suggesting that the Basque Country may call for secession once again for the separatist tendencies have not vanished in it. "The Basque Country has already declared its desire to secede from the Spanish territory starting next year" (Siyasa Post 24/9/2017). It is a region that suffered from violence and the deaths of hundreds where ETA movement has been leading the process of armed secession for many years until a cease-fire took place three years ago and the movement abandoned its weapon after having achieved more powers for the region. So, any secession occurring in one province would most probably be followed by others. The Spanish Minister of (Justice) warned of this and was quoted saying: "I am deeply concerned that the independence of Catalonia will actually bring an end to the Spanish state, because the independence of Catalonia could set off a "domino effect" across the bloc". (Al Jazeera, 2/10/2017).

Spain, therefore, cannot accept in any way the splitting up of the region of Catalonia, rather, it threatens to activate Article 155 to prevent the autonomy of the region if it cannot prevent the separation by any means as understood from the Spanish Prime Minister's Office, as reported by BBC on 19 October 2017.

3. Moreover, The European Union is about to collapse if the idea of secession spreads in its parts, especially if secession is achieved. This is because there are secessionist movements in France, where the Catalonia region and the Basque Country are divided between France and Spain, and there is a separatist movement in the island of Corsica seeking independence from France and waiting for the success of the Catalonia region's move. Also, there are separatist movements in Italy, Belgium and others, which threaten the cohesion of the European Union which suffers from the many crises and threats from the nationalist movements to get out of it as happened with Brexit.

All these make the possibility of implementing this separation unlikely and extremely difficult, for it is a threat, not only to Spain, but to the European Union as a whole.

It seems that the president of the region has begun to realize this as he saw himself almost isolated even in the region itself, for he was protested by masses of people. Therefore, the decision to declare independence was not complete as the President of the region postponed its implementation until negotiations to achieve greater independence for the region as well as to create opportunities and await the favorable circumstances for achieving future independence,

whether this is for the status of Spain or the status of the European Union. Even America that encouraged it has slowed down supporting it when it saw Spain's strong position with the support of the European Union. That is why President Trump said during his meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister, Rajoy, who went to the United States to explore its opinion on the independence of Catalonia, "We're dealing with a great, great country and it should remain united" (Egyptian Ashoroq 27/9/2017). And the President of the region will recognize that Trump is like the devil (Shaytan) in his promise ﴿يَعِدُّهُمْ وَيُمَتِّبُهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا﴾ **“Satan promises them and arouses desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion.” [Surah An-Nisaa: 120].** However, America will continue to undermine the European Union, and will find those who respond to its promises in Europe!

Fifthly: Thus, nationalism erodes the owners of the capitalist ideology, especially Europe, deteriorating it and weakening its union, cohesion and its political work abroad. Because, the capitalist ideology could not address the issue of nationalism, and will not be able to, it is a failed ideology besides being void from its basis of separating religion from life. And it is corrupt because of its democracy which is controlled by the owners of capital who win positions and privileges in its name and in the exploitation of its law. It is also repressive because it fights religion and those who adhere to it, and due to the existence of discrimination between people on religious and ethnic bases. This is manifested in America and Europe and it is not mistaken and not overlooked by vision.

All the man-made laws are not clear of this injustice, oppression and corruption nor from the enslavement of the country and the people. It is only Islam, which is revealed by Allah, the Lord of the worlds, that establishes the Truth (al-Haqq) and justice among people and set right their affairs, ﴿أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ﴾ **“Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?” [Al-Mulk: 14].**

It is Islam that melts people into one nation and eliminates nationalistic and tribal divisions and rivalries as it forbids all nationalistic tendencies and all forms of Assabiyah and fights them a relentless war. It is Islam that establishes justice among the people in taking care of their affairs without any discrimination in care in terms of religion, ethnicity, color, gender or anything else, but all people are considered equal; treated with justice before the judiciary under the shade of Khilafah Rashidah (righteous Caliphate) state.

Imam Ahmed reported in his Musnad: Ismail narrated through Said al-Jurairi through Abi Nadra through those who listened to the Messenger of Allah (saw) in the middle of the days of at-Tashriq that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، أَلَا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ، وَإِنَّ أَبَائَكُمْ وَاحِدٌ، أَلَا لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى عَجَمِيٍّ، وَلَا لِعَجَمِيٍّ عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ، وَلَا أَحْمَرَ عَلَى أَسْوَدٍ، وَلَا أَسْوَدَ عَلَى أَحْمَرَ، إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى أَبْلَغْتُمْ»، قَالُوا: بَلَّغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ... ﷺ.

“O' people, your Lord is one, and your father is one. There is no virtue for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab, and neither for a red-skin [person] over a black-skin [person], nor for a black-skin [person] over a red-skin [person], except by righteousness (Taqwa). Have I delivered the message?” They said, “The Messenger of Allah has delivered the message.”

This is the Truth (Alhaqq): ﴿فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ﴾ **“And what can be beyond truth except error? So how are you averted?” [Yunis: 32]**

29th Muharram 1439 AH

19/10/2017 CE