Catalonia, 1 October 2017: a fact sheet

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This one-page summary accompanies our article on the Catalan independence referendum of 1 October 2017 and the international visitors who reported on it. It was written by the editors of The Union Question and is not the report of any observation team.

Key dates

6 Sept 2017	Parliament of Catalonia passes the referendum law (Law 19/2017).
7 Sept 2017	Constitutional Court suspends the law.
20 Sept 2017	Civil Guard searches of Catalan government offices; officials arrested.
1 Oct 2017	Vote held; National Police and Civil Guard act to close polling stations.
27 Oct 2017	Catalan Parliament declares independence (70-10, 2 blank); Senate approves Article 155.
21 Dec 2017	Regional election called by the Spanish government.

Figures announced by the Catalan government

2,286,217 votes counted; 2,044,038 (90.2%) for independence; turnout about 43% of an electorate of some 5.3 million. The government said votes from closed stations were lost or seized. With no state electoral roll, no recognised electoral commission and most opponents abstaining, the figures could not be independently verified.

Police action and injuries

The Catalan health service reported 893 people attended on the day, a figure later revised upwards; the Spanish interior ministry reported injured police officers. Human Rights Watch concluded on 12 October 2017 that police had used excessive force against peaceful protesters at several sites it investigated.

Who observed?

No OSCE/ODIHR mission was present, since Spain did not recognise the vote. The Catalan authorities invited 'international visitors' - parliamentarians, academics and election professionals - including the International Expert Research Team led by Helena Catt. Small teams also travelled independently, among them people from Scotland with experience of UK polling stations and counts. These teams were not accredited by the state holding the vote and many members sympathised with the right to vote.

How observers report

Under the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, missions usually issue a preliminary statement within a day or two of polling and a final report with recommendations weeks or months later. Reports on 1 October followed this pattern: early statements described queues, determined voters and stations where police had stopped voting; later reports added detail on the 'universal census' and on the absence of safeguards needed to verify results.

Sources: Constitutional Court of Spain; Generalitat de Catalunya, results of 6 October 2017; Human Rights Watch, 'Spain: Police Used Excessive Force in Catalonia', 12 October 2017; Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, 2005; Supreme Court of Spain, judgment 459/2019. Full article: englishscotsforyes.org/2017/12/14/catalonia-observation-mission-report/.
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