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**CATALAN LEADER PUIGDEMONT URGES MADRID TO START TALKS AFTER SEPARATISTS' ELECTION WIN**

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EuroNews (22 December 2017)

The ousted Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont has called on the Spanish government to respect the result of the region's snap election.

Speaking in Brussels, where he's been living in self-imposed exile to avoid sedition charges, he urged Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to immediately start unconditional talks on implementing the "clear will of the Catalan people." "I'm ready to meet Rajoy in Brussels or anywhere else in Europe, but not in Spain for obvious reasons," he said. "We have to talk about the new political era that's beginning in Catalonia, in Spain and across Europe. And that must be a step marked by political solutions.

"We've at least won the right to be heard," he said, adding that he was open to returning to Spain if guarantees were given that he could take his position as head of a potential new Catalan government. Currently he faces the prospect of arrest for his role in organising the banned referendum.

Puigdemont went on to say the situation called for "rectification, reparation and restitution."

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Kaynak/Source: