

Beat: Politics

## **EP withdraws the immunity of 3 responsible for the Catalan secessionist attempt**

### **So that they can be tried in Spain**

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**USPA NEWS** - The European Parliament agreed on Tuesday by majority to lift the immunity of Spanish MEPs Carles Puigdemont, Toni Comin and Clara Ponsatí, accused in Spain for the attempted secession in Catalonia in 2017, so that they can be tried by the Spanish courts. However, their delivery to Spain will not be immediate, since the three announced their intention to appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The Plenary of the European Parliament approved stripping of their immunity to the three Spanish euro parliamentarians by 400 votes in favor, 248 against and 45 abstentions, in the case of the former president of the regional government of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, and by 404 votes in favor, 247 against and 42 abstentions in the case of the other two MEPs. The lifting of immunity is common in the European Parliament when the courts request it to judge alleged crimes committed by MEPs outside their parliamentary activity, as in this case because the alleged crimes committed by the three Spanish MEPs happened before they were elected European parliamentarians.

The conservative European People's Party, the Socialists and the Liberals voted in favor of lifting the immunity of the three Spanish Euro parliamentarians, while the Greens, the Left and more than a dozen parliamentarians, including representatives of the Spanish political parties Podemos, Izquierda Unida, Basque Nationalist Party and Bildu voted against.

In a press conference at noon this Tuesday at the headquarters of the European Parliament, the former president of the regional government of Catalonia and current MEP, Carles Puigdemont, affirmed that "we have lost but Parliament has lost more than us and democracy, too. This is political persecution," before adding that the Spanish Government will take advantage of the decision of the European Parliament to revoke the third degree of prison for those responsible for the secessionist attempt who are imprisoned in Spain. The third degree of prison allows to live a normal life outside of prison and return to prison just to sleep.

"We are at the disposal of the Belgian courts, but at the same time we are going to appeal to the Court of Justice," announced Puigdemont at the same press conference. "We have always said that it was impossible, if not very difficult, to win. If there is a surprise it is positive, because the level of rejection is exceptional. 42% of the votes did not want to give support, more than in the Committee on Legal Affairs. It may have been the most rejected request in the history of Parliament. There are 80 deputies from the four favorable groups who have broken discipline," said, for his part, the former counselor of the regional government of Catalonia and current Euro parliamentarian Toni Comín.

But the withdrawal of parliamentary immunity to the three Catalan MEPs does not imply their immediate delivery to Spain to stand trial. Spanish Supreme Court judge Pablo Llarena issued two European arrest warrants against Puigdemont, Comin and Ponsatí, which were rejected by the Belgian and Scottish courts. In view of these antecedents, the magistrate presented this Tuesday before the Court of Justice of the EU a preliminary question to rule on the possibilities of issuing a European Arrest Warrant and on the reasons that could cause its rejection by the courts Belgians and Scots. The response of the European Court of Justice will determine whether the Spanish judge reactivates the European arrest warrants for the three Catalan MEPs to be tried for the alleged acts of sedition, embezzlement of public funds and disobedience.

#### **Article online:**

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**Editorial program service of General News Agency:**

United Press Association, Inc.  
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168  
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA  
(702) 943.0321 Local  
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile  
[info@unitedpressassociation.org](mailto:info@unitedpressassociation.org)  
[info@gna24.com](mailto:info@gna24.com)  
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