# Spanish Parliament Passes Amnesty Law for Catalan Separatists Amid Controversy



**Spanish Parliament Approves Amnesty Law for Catalan Separatists**

On Thursday, May 30, 2024, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and the first deputy PM María Jesús Montero saw the passage of a contentious amnesty law by a vote of 177 to 172 in the 350-seat congress. This new law will apply to roughly 400 individuals involved in Catalonia's symbolic independence referendum in November 2014 and the illegal unilateral referendum of 2017.

The most notable beneficiary of this legislation is former Catalan regional president Carles Puigdemont, who has been in self-imposed exile in Belgium since 2017 to avoid arrest due to his role in the secession attempt. Once the law is published, Puigdemont will be permitted to return to Spain after nearly seven years.

Others benefiting from the amnesty include headteachers who allowed schools to function as polling stations, civil servants, firefighters, and police officers involved in the 2017 voting.

This amnesty law emerged after the conservative People’s Party (PP), despite winning the most seats in last July’s snap election, failed to secure enough support to form a government. Sánchez’s Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party (PSOE) needed the backing of Catalan pro-independence parties Junts and ERC. Their support was contingent on the amnesty.

The amnesty sparked significant opposition, with protests outside PSOE headquarters in Madrid and demonstrations across Spain. According to a poll, 70% of Spaniards disapproved of the law. Despite this opposition, the regional branch of the PSOE won the recent Catalan election, although without a majority.

PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo criticized the law, accusing Sánchez of undermining justice for political gain. The law could face further challenges as it will be implemented by judges on a case-by-case basis and may be appealed in higher courts.