Spain takes over Catalonia, fires defiant separatist leaders

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Barcelona: Spain has taken direct control of Catalonia and sacked the regionâ€™s defiant separatist government by publishing special measures overnight in an official gazette online.

People wave "estelada" or pro independence flags outside the Palau Generalitat in Barcelona

The move early today came after separatist Catalan lawmakers passed a declaration of independence yesterday.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who now replaces Catalan President Carles Puigdemont as the top decision-maker in the northeastern region, has dissolved the regional parliament and called a new regional election on December 21.

Puigdemont and the 12 members of the Catalan Cabinet will no longer be paid and could be charged with usurping othersâ€™ functions if they refuse to obey.

There was no immediate response from the top Catalan officials. Only the director of the Catalan regional police, who was also fired, issued a statement saying he would comply.

- AP