VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Philip Alexiou reporting.

Catalonia's deposed President Carles Puigdemont vowing on Saturday to keep fighting for independence after the Spanish central government ordered him to accept his cabinet's dismissal.

The Spanish region of Catalonia is now under the direct control of Madrid.

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy dissolving Catalonia's parliament just hours after the regional body voted in favor of independence from Spain.

In addition to dismissing the regional parliament, Rajoy has called for snap Catalan elections on December 21 and has stripped Catalonia's most senior police officials of their powers.

In a pre-recorded statement, Puigdemont said that he would continue working to build a free country and that only the regional parliament has the authority to dismiss the Catalan government.

At least 20 people, including a Somali politician, were killed when [a car] a pair of car bombs ripped through Somalia's capital Saturday. That's two weeks after a huge bomb killed more than 350 people.

(Officials in Madobe Nunow, the interior minister of Southwest state of Somalia was among the dead.) Officials said Madobe Nunow, the interior minister of Southwest state of Somalia, was among the dead. More than 40 people were injured in the two explosions.

The first blast occurring at the popular Nasa Hablod Two hotel, which al-Shabaab gunmen stormed after detonating a car filled with explosives at the hotel's gate.

The second car bomb exploding near the former parliament building, causing unknown damage.

An earthquake striking in a mountainous region in [northwestern] northeastern, rather, Afghanistan late Saturday could be felt in nearby Pakistan.

The U.S. Geological Survey recording a 5.2 magnitude quake.

No reports of injuries or damage so far.

This is VOA news.

A U.S. federal grand jury has approved the first charges in an investigation of Russian influence on U.S. elections, according to several major news outlets. VOA's Sarah Williams has more.

The grand jury's action, resulting from the probe led by special counsel Robert Mueller, was first reported by CNN on Friday evening. It quoted sources as saying anyone who is charged could be taken into custody as soon as Monday. The exact charges are unclear.

Reuters, *The Wall Street Journal* and NBC News have subsequently issued similar reports. All the reports have been attributed to unnamed sources.

White House officials not commenting on the president's activities on Saturday, but he was seen by VOA News exiting the north portico of the residence, clad in slacks, a windbreaker, and what appeared to be white golf shoes and a baseball cap before entering a black vehicle for the 40-minute ride in the presidential motorcade to his private club along the Potomac River not far from Washington.

CNN reporting that the lawyers working for Mueller's team were seen entering the federal courtroom in Washington, D.C. on Friday, where the grand jury meets to hear testimony.

The Iraqi Kurdish parliament will meet Sunday to redistribute powers away from President Massoud Barzani, who is under pressure to step down following an independence referendum last month.

The parliament had already decided to halt Barzani's governmental activities and, on Saturday, said it would read out a statement from Barzani during the upcoming meeting.

Despite securing an overwhelming "yes" vote in the independence referendum, Barzani finds himself in a tough position after Iraqi federal forces moved to reclaim territory near the city of Kirkuk.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi calling the referendum vote illegal, and in response he sent his forces to retake control of disputed areas that were in control of the Kurds.

The U.N. children's fund warning potentially life-threatening malnutrition is soaring among Rohingya refugee children who have fled to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, to escape violence and abuse in Myanmar. Lisa Schlein reports with more.

The U.N. children's fund does not know the extent of acute malnutrition among Rohingya child refugees. So, UNICEF spokeswoman Marixie Mercado says a nutrition survey is underway that will provide vital data when it is completed in November.

"What we already know is that the combination of malnutrition, sanitary conditions, and disease in the refugee settlements, is potentially catastrophic for children."

More than 600,000 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Cox's Bazar since August 25 to escape violence and persecution in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State.

And that's the news. I'm Philip Alexiou.

That's the latest world news from VOA.