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Barcelona Football Club Faces Expulsion if Catalonia Leaves Spain

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The president of La Liga, Spain's top professional soccer league, said on Tuesday that Catalan clubs, including Barcelona, would not be allowed to play if the region succeeds in its push for independence from Spain.

The statement from Javier Tebas came as tensions mounted over the possibility of an independence referendum next month.

Tebas explained that the country's sports law allows only one non-Spanish territory, which is Andorra, to legally participate in the league.

If Catalan clubs were expelled, then the top professional association football division of Spain would lose one of the world's top clubs, FC Barcelona, as well as Espanyol.

Independence is overwhelmingly opposed by Spain's parliament, where the government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has a large majority. A debate held in April vetoed the region's request to hold a referendum by 299 votes against to 47 in favor.

Catalans have grown consistently discontent with the Spanish government in recent years over austerity measures and Spain's growing economic crisis. Catalonia is one of the richest and highly-industrialized regions of Spain.

According to polls a huge majority of Catalans demand an independence referendum, encouraged by a similar referendum in Scotland last month, though the Scottish referendum

rejected independence.

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