

SCOTLAND: WESTMINSTER FEARS SECOND REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE

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Westminster is blocking a second Scottish independence referendum, known as 'indyref2,'

because they fear its outcome, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has claimed.

Sturgeon made the remark on Thursday, November 24th, [the day after the UK Supreme Court ruled](#) the Scottish Parliament does not have the power to hold an independence vote without Westminster's consent, which it has thus far refused to grant. A first referendum on Scottish independence, held in 2014, came to naught.

Speaking [during the First Minister's Questions](#) at Holyrood, Sturgeon (Scottish National Party), who with her center-left party had [her heart set on a referendum for October 19th next year](#), was left "disappointed" by the ruling, yet respected the court's judgment.

She however insisted: "Unionist Westminster politicians want to silence Scotland's voice because they are scared of what Scotland might say. It is quite simple."

Sturgeon interprets successive rejections from the Tories for 'indyref2' to be held—with the latest from UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak—as moves to "block democracy" itself. She said:

Any politician who was confident of their case and confident of being able to persuade others of their case would not be trying to block democracy, they would be embracing democracy.

The First Minister had been asked by SNP backbencher Stephanie Callaghan for her response to the Supreme Court ruling. This prompted Sturgeon to say that the judgment "raises profoundly uncomfortable questions about the basis and the future of the United Kingdom," and that "any partnership in which one partner needs the consent of another to choose its own future is not voluntary and it's not even a partnership."

With Holyrood having a majority of pro-independence MSPs, the First Minister continued:

“The mandate for an independence referendum in this Parliament is undeniable, there is a clear majority for that.”

She stressed her willingness to discuss the issue with the UK government “at any time,” but is doubtful any concessions will be made: “I fully anticipate that their democracy denial will continue, at least in the short-term, because they are scared of the outcome of a democratic process.”

She assured Scotland of her commitment nonetheless, concluding that “regardless of attempts by Westminster to block democracy, I will always work to ensure that Scotland’s voice is heard and that the future of Scotland is always in Scotland’s hands.”

The day before, when asked by Ian Blackford, leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), in the House of Commons about whether England and Scotland’s union was indeed still “voluntary” and not “dead and buried,” UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak gave no reply.

Instead, he said that he welcomed the Supreme Court’s “clear and definitive” unanimous verdict, but that he thought “that the people of Scotland want us to be working on fixing the major challenges that we collectively face, whether that is the economy, supporting the NHS (National Health Service) or indeed supporting Ukraine.” Now, he added, was “the time for politicians to work together and that’s what this government will do”—a goal he felt, though did not say outright, would be best served while the two remained in the Union.

Blackford in turn responded by flaunting the UK’s obvious breach of democratic spirit:

The prime minister can’t claim to respect the rule of law and then deny democracy in the very same breath. If democracy matters, if elections matter, then mandates matter. Since 2014, the SNP has won eight elections in a row. Last year, we won a landslide. The Scottish Parliament now has the biggest majority for an independence referendum in the history of devolution. The PM

doesn't even have a personal mandate to sit in 10 Downing Street. What right does a man with no mandate have to deny Scottish democracy?

The same night, Sturgeon [took to the stage](#) of a rally outside [Holyrood](#) to address the crowd. The event marked the first time the First Minister had addressed such a rally since November 2019.

After thanking all attendees for coming, she cast the independence movement, in which she had been long involved, in a new light; it had now, according to her, gone on to become "Scotland's democracy movement."

The First Minister said that Wednesday's ruling may "create temporary relief on the part of Unionist politicians and parties" (including the Scottish Tory party, which is opposed to independence) but added that "the hardest questions" emerging from the verdict were "for them because they are questions about the future and basis of the United Kingdom."

On the next steps for the independence movement, Sturgeon stressed the need for a "democratic process" to allow that "majority opinion to be expressed beyond any doubt."

This follows the First Minister's [previous statements](#) that she would be holding a special party conference to discuss how the next General Election could be utilized as a de-facto referendum.

Sturgeon concluded with the enjoiner:

Let us rededicate ourselves to that task today. Let us make sure that we take this message to every part of Scotland because what has been shown beyond any doubt today is that the only route to equality for Scotland within the British family of nations is by Scotland becoming an independent country.

Sturgeon, who has been First Minister since 2014, has made an independent Scotland part of her platform for most of her political career. She believes that with its independence, Scotland would be a stronger and more competitive country.

After the 2016 vote leading to Brexit, which saw 62% of Scottish citizens voting to remain in the EU, Sturgeon said that her government would begin planning for a second independence referendum. She claimed that it was “clear that the people of Scotland see their future as part of the European Union” and that Scotland had “spoken decisively” with a “strong, unequivocal” vote.

In 2019, she led her party to a landslide victory in the 2019 United Kingdom general election in Scotland. The SNP won 80% of all seats in Scotland. In the wake of the results, Sturgeon said that then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson had “no right” to stand in the way of another Scottish independence referendum, saying that the result “renews, reinforces and strengthens” that mandate.

It is a mandate, as should be amply clear by now, Sturgeon is hell-bent on fulfilling.