

Beat: Politics

Spain celebrates its national holiday conditioned by the pandemic

Columbus Day 2020

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USPA NEWS - Spain celebrated Hispanic Day on Monday, its national holiday that commemorates the discovery of America by the Genoese sailor Christopher Columbus at the head of an expedition sponsored by the Spanish Crown. This year, without major events as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the holidays to be suspended in the city of Zaragoza and the traditional military parade in Madrid.

This Monday is also celebrated the feast of the Virgen del Pilar, patron saint of Zaragoza and the Civil Guard. The Aragonese capital suspended the traditional offering of flowers to the Virgin and deployed more than one hundred police officers to prevent massive concentrations of citizens that endanger the fight against the coronavirus. In the same spirit, the Spanish Government suspended the traditional military parade through the streets of Madrid and replaced it with a civic-military act in the courtyard of the Armory of the Royal Palace, presided over by the Kings of Spain, Felipe VI and Letizia, with assistance from the Princess of Asturias, Leonor de Borbón, and the Infanta Sofía.

The act began with the raising of the flag, after which the King awarded decorations to six members of the Spanish Armed Forces who distinguished themselves in the fight against the coronavirus during the first wave of the pandemic, between last March to June. The Spanish Army collaborates with the civil authorities in the disinfection of public spaces, the detection of positives and the control of infections. The civilian bodies that work tirelessly to end the pandemic were also honored: local police, firefighters, health workers and Civil Protection personnel.

After the homage to the fallen, a brief parade began through the courtyard of the Armory, in which representative units of the Royal Guard, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force took part. As a novelty, several sections of the Legion also paraded, which this year has completed its first century of existence and which were cheered by the public gathered around the Royal Palace. Shouts of "Long live the King!" and "Government, resignation" were heard upon the arrival of the members of the Government of the social-communist coalition chaired by Pedro SÁnchez.

The ceremony in the Royal Palace was attended by all the members of the Government and twelve presidents of as many Spanish regions, as well as the leaders of the opposition and representatives of Spanish society. But, as a result of the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, this year the traditional reception offered by the Kings was suspended, which was attended by 1,500 people last year and where the press and politicians talk without cameras or recorders, on the issues current.

On behalf of the United States Government, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo sent a message to Spain on Monday, in which he recalled that "the United States counts Spain as one of its strongest allies and friends." He added that "our two countries share a rich history and an enduring commitment to democratic values. The United States and Spain are working together to overcome COVID-19 as we deepen our economic and security partnerships. Our relationship with Spain," the message explained, "extends far beyond government-to-government connections, with broad cultural ties and between people that emanate from our shared history."

And he concluded: "We look forward to continuing our long-standing partnership, promoting our key bilateral interests, promoting our shared values and tackling transnational challenges together with our Spanish friends."

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