



17th March-1st April 2008

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**730 Basque political prisoners. The number of Basque prisoners reaches one of the highest points in history.**

730 Basque political prisoners. Since 1969 there has not been as many Basque prisoners scattered in tens of prisons in France and Spain.

The number of Basque political prisoners has reached its highest point. We have to go as far as the sixties to find similar figures which was during Franco's dictatorship.

Although in 1977 an amnesty law was implemented, since then, the number of arrests and imprisonment of Basques has been on the increase.

Since 2000, there has been a huge increase. However, the last months have been the most significant ones. In the last 8 months the number of prisoners has increased by 142 prisoners.

This imprisonment in mass is due to the latest political trials that have taken place against the Basque Youth movement, as well as political and social activists and people accused of taking part in street riots.

Another reason for such an increase of prisoners is the extension of sentences and the obstacles that authorities are putting against releasing Basque prisoners.

Living conditions in prisons have also worsened and prisoners are scattered all around French, Spanish and Canadian jails.

**Thousands of Basques take part in the united Basque National day or Aberri Eguna.**

Thousands got together, on Easter Sunday, to defend the path to sovereignty by overcoming political borders.

The Basque Homeland Day took place in the border that divides the Basque Country between the French and Spanish States.

Many Basques from different tendencies and political beliefs took part in the event and highlighted the need to leave differences to one side and start working together.

"We are a nation, seven provinces in one and in favour of self determination" was the slogan for this year's event.

Despite a wide representation of political parties and social sectors the so called Basque Nationalist Party/PNV was not present.

This the same Basque Nationalist Party which prefers to make a deal with the Spanish Labour Party to maintain its power rather than work towards a resolution of the political conflict.

**Thousands of Basque youth take part in the Youth Encounter/Gazte Topagunea.**

Thousands of Basque young people gathered in Lezo, near Donostia/San Sebastian for four days during Easter in the bi-annual Gazte Topagunea or Youth Encounter.

Despite the miserable weather 5,000 young people stayed permanently camped in Lezo. Some other thousands came to the different events organised along the days. Another 2,000 young people came from other countries from all around Europe and America to show solidarity with the repressed Basque Youth movement.

The Basque youth pro-independence movement, once again, showed its huge strength and ability to organise hundreds of gigs, debates, workshops and many more activities, making the Gazte

Topagunea a unique experience in Europe.

For four days the Basque revolutionary youth fulfilled their objective of building a Basque socialist independent state of their dream.

New relationships and energies were created during the Encounter and it is now the time to bring these experiences to all corners of the Basque Country.

**Dozens of people took part in the annual mountain march organised by Eguzki, the Basque pro-independence environmental movement last Easter.**

They had to confront snow, rain and cold but they were able to bring their demands for a free and alive Basque Country through the mountains of the province of Araba.

They visited different places where the wind-mills are destroying the landscape and denounced the millionaire business behind them. They pointed at the so called Basque Nationalist Party as the main responsible for it.

The march ended on Easter Sunday, the Basque Homeland Day. At the rally, Eguzki said that without land, without Mother Earth there is not territoriality, there is not homeland and there is not future.

**The Basque-Spanish police harassed and created great tension on Easter Saturday in the village of Ibarra where some events were organised to welcome home two local already former Basque political prisoners.**

Hundreds of people took part in the rally and dinner to welcome Eider Ijurko and Ekaitz Aramendi after 5 years since they were kidnapped by the Spanish police.

It's usual that the local Basque authorities ban all kinds of homage and homecomings of former Basque political prisoners.

**150 people attended the annual Irish Basque Good Friday Night at the Conway Mill in Belfast organised by the local branch of the Irish Basque Committees.**

Ska-reggae music and Basque struggle videos created a great atmosphere at the Mill.

The warmest moment of the night came when former Basque political prisoner Jaime Rementeria took to the stage. Jaime was released three years ago after serving 21 in Spanish jails. It was his first time out of the Basque Country.

The Irish Basque Committees presented him with some gifts and Jaime thanked the public for the welcome. He also remembered the comrades who died and those who are still in prison.

The local Belfast branch of the Irish Basque Committees wants to thank everybody who attended the event for making it another huge success.

**An ETA car bomb explosion destroys a police station.**

On Easter Saturday ETA planted a car bomb outside the Spanish police barracks. It happened in the middle of the town of Calahorra, just a few miles from the Basque Country. An ETA member called a local emergency service to warn about the bomb. 30 minutes later the explosion

destroyed the barracks. One policeman was slightly injured. The value of the damage caused was of 3.5 million euros. A new barrack will have to be built outside the town.

Another bomb planted by ETA destroyed a TV signal station outside the Basque town of Azpeitia on Saturday.

**The French police recovered a couple of home-made bombs near a golf resort in the northern Basque village of Ziburu.**

Beside the bombs on a wall there was a large graffiti which said "The Basque Country is not on sale".

Many similar actions have been taking place for the last year and a half in the north of the Basque Country. French government boosted tourism and speculation is destroying the environment and forcing young people to emigrate.

**The pro-independence party Batasuna has urged Basque citizens to stop the fraud that the Basque Nationalist Party/PNV and the Spanish Labour Party/PSOE want to commit against Basque Country.**

Following the electoral blow that the PNV suffered at the last elections, Batasuna believes that the PNV is prepared to make a deal with the Spanish Labour party at all costs.

A new fraud which will have serious consequences for the future of the Basque Country according to Batasuna.

The PNV is anxious to make a deal with the Spanish Labour Party to maintain their power no matter what.

But such agreement would destroy the possibility of resolving the political conflict within democratic parameters. Batasuna believes that such fraud will extend the conflict and has urged Basque citizens to rebel.

**The Spanish Labour Party is getting ready to present a motion to censure pro independence mayors and council representatives.**

Although the pro independence parties were banned from standing at the last general election in March, some were able to take part in local elections last year and won a significant number of council representatives and mayors.

But the Spanish Labour Party wants to present a motion to censure them.

The pro independence movement has highlighted that no one has the legitimacy to do such a thing and that the Spanish Labour Party is trying to exclude the pro independence parties which have proven that there are alternatives to resolving the Basque political conflict.

The pro independence movement has also reminded that in last year's election 200.000 people voted in favour of pro independence candidates. And to ban these representatives from councils would be to deny a voice to a significant section of the people in the Basque Country.

**Basque Spanish police attacks a rally in Eibar Gipuzkoa.**

Prisoner Ibon Munoa was granted a visit to go and see his very ill parents. He was accompanied

by the police.

A rally was called in support of the prisoner. People shouted messages of support to Ibon. At that stage protesters were attacked by the police.

## **People in Zornotza demand the release of prisoner Legorburu and Etxezarreta.**

Juan Jose Legorburu has been in prison for 22 years and Joseba Etxezarreta for 10. According to the Spanish law, the two prisoners should have been released in 2001 and 2006, but the Spanish authorities are refusing to do so.

On Sunday neighbours and friends got together demand the release of the two prisoners. In a letter written by the prisoners, they explain that hard times are coming and that this is a time to resist, and demand to each Basque to do their bit.

**“They want to give us death sentences. That is my fear, will I be able to face that.” Said last week former political prisoners and currently on the run Fernando Etxegarai.**

The Spanish authorities have released an arrest warrant against, Fernando Etxegarai a former political prisoner.

Fernando spent 20 years and 9 months in Spanish prisons. He was released in January after doing his time fully. However, the Spanish court want to jail him for another 4 years.

Fernando knows well the horrendous prison conditions and is scared of having to go back for another 4 years. Prison policies are created to destroy prisoners and he wonders will he be able to face another 4 years.

## **The anti repression group Askatasuna has denounced the case against Iban Apaolaza, imprisoned in Quebec.**

Iban was arrested last June in Montréal (Quebec). A procedure has been open to hand him over to the Spanish authorities who are looking for him. His name was mentioned by Anabel Egues who is currently in prison and was tortured when arrested. Anabel mentioned Iban's name while being tortured and the Spanish authorities are now looking for him.

The anti repression group Askatasuna, denounced the witch hunt against Basques who are on the run throughout the world.

In the case of Iban, if he is left in the hands of the Spanish authorities, there is a serious risk of him being tortured.

Due to the current situation in the Basque country, many citizens have been force to flee the Basque Country to avoid being tortured or imprisoned. Currently an estimated 2,500 Basque citizens are on the run and live in countries across Europe and America. Most of them have to endure hard living conditions and many of them have died without being able to come back home.

On Easter the Basque Political Refugees Collective launched an statement on a video format. The statement is read by Joseba Sarrionaindia one of the most famous On The Runs. He escaped from jail 22 years ago and has become since the in one of the most popular and awarded Basque writer.

He says: “We, Basque political refugees, have been living around the world for many years now. We have learnt that the world is wider than France and Spain. We live in Venezuela, Brazil, Ireland, Cape Verde.... all independent nations nowadays. Have they regreted of being independent? No, they haven't. This is why today as well and in the future, we, Basque political refugees, will continue defending independence for our old nation. We have the right to come

back to a free Basque Country and so we'll do.”

### **Basque citizens don't feel that they live in a democracy.**

Over 60% of the people living in the three Basque western provinces of Araba, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia are not satisfied with the way democracy works in the Basque Country or in the Spanish State.

These are the latest results of a survey carried out by the local government.

6 people out of 10 believe that democracy is not working in the Basque Country.

66% of the population also believes that human rights are not respected.

The majority of the population also think that people have no right to defend their ideas. They are also opposed to the banning political parties and the political trials against social and political activists.

As to independence, 28% of the population is in favour of Independence against 27% who are opposed to it. 34% of the population would agree to independence depending on the circumstances.

### **One hundred people from the Basque town of Idiazabal have been touring Scotland in favour of self-determination during Easter.**

Dancers, musicians, Basque sportsmen and women took part in different events in the streets of Edinburgh and Inverness. They were officially received at the Scottish Parliament and local councils.

The Basque delegation carried out banners in favour of self-determination for the Basque Country and Scotland. They created a huge interest among locals and there was also a large coverage of the events in the media.