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Basque peace process - Otegi visit to European Parliament

Press release from EFA MEPs J-M Terricabras & Tatjana Ždanoka

At the invitation of the European Parliament's Basque Friendship Group, well-known Basque independentist figure Arnalo Otegi is visiting Brussels to push for greater support for the Basque peace process.

MEPs have called for the Spanish government to enter into dialogue in the search for a lasting peace, with EU support if necessary.



Basque Friendship Group in the European Parliament

EFA MEPs **Josep-Maria Terricabras** and **Tatjana Zdanoka** visited the Basque Country in February this year as part of a cross-party delegation of MEPs to look into the peace process, and in particular the sensitive issue of politically motivated prisoners. They are publishing a report of their findings. EFA MEPs have always condemned violence and supported a peaceful, negotiated solution to the Basque conflict.

Josep-Maria Terricabras MEP, President of the EFA Group in the European Parliament, said:

"The release of Arnaldo Otegi should be a catalyst for progress in building a lasting peace in the Basque Country.

"The Basque peace process has so far been unusual to say the least, in that the Spanish government has shamelessly failed to engage with sincere cross-community efforts to build a framework for peace. We now need dialogue between all concerned parties, including the EU and international figures, in order to resolve outstanding issues.

"One of these is the question of prisoners. We are greatly concerned by Spain's punitive policy of dispersal, which causes unjustified suffering for prisoners and their families, and is an unnecessary obstacle on the road to a peaceful resolution."

Tatjana Zdanoka MEP, said:

"My visit to the Basque Country in February to consider the issue of prisoners in the context of the peace process has left a deep impression. There are hundreds of Basque politically motivated prisoners held many hundreds of kilometres from home.

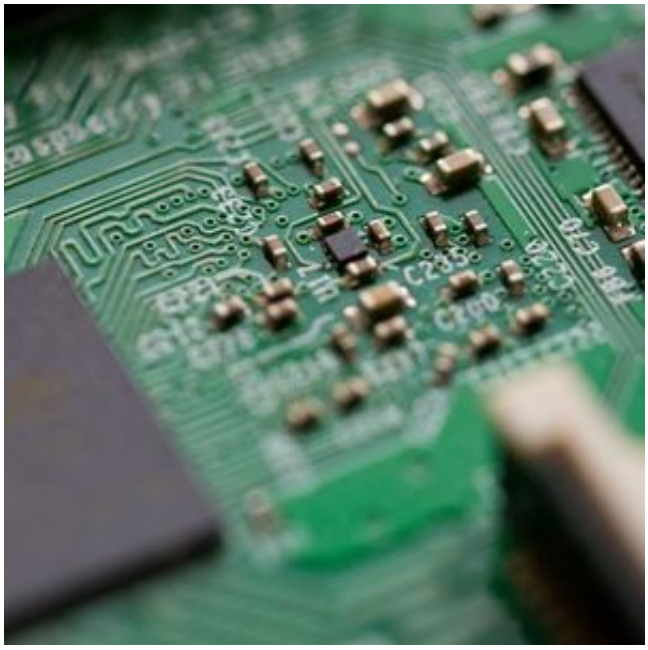
"It is clear that the dispersal policy of the Spanish government not only causes unnecessary suffering for prisoners and their families, it also builds up deep ill-feeling and resentment which is unhelpful in the peace process.

"The Spanish government's policy of prisoner dispersal is totally at odds with the European Convention on Human Rights and has no place in a civilised society."

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Josep Maria Terricabras

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

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