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Press release | 11.12.2012

Basque politicians' letter on EU institutions and Basque peace

More than a year since the signing of the historic Gernika agreement that brought peace to the Basque Country, and in the light of recent elections, Basque politicians visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg at the invitation of MEPs from the parliament's Basque Friendship Group.

They published a letter addressed to the European Council, Commission and Parliament calling for concrete support from the EU for the Basque peace process.

The letter was presented at a press conference in the European Parliament by Lorena Lopez de la Calle (EA), Maite Aristegi (Amaiur), Jon Inarritu (Amaiur - Aralar) and Igor Urrutikoetxea (LAB trade union) on behalf of the political, union and social organisations who signed the Gernika Agreement.

MEPs Francois Alfonsi, Ana Miranda and Tatjana Zdanoka, all members of the EP's Basque Friendship Group, took part in the press conference and met the delegation. The delegation also met Hannes Swoboda, President of the Socialist Group, and visited the Council of Europe.

In their letter to Van Rompuy, Barroso and Schultz, they make the following concrete points:

1. That the European Union invite Member States France and Spain to deal with the consequences of the Basque conflict by applying international dispute-resolution standards.

2. Should they not do so, that the European Union lead that phase of the peace process which consists of settling the conflict, as a party involved in it.

3. That the Union call upon the States to undertake to respect human rights, to desist from resorting to emergency legislation, and to comply with and implement the ECHR's rulings.

The full text of the letter is copied below.

Ends

Notes
Letter on behalf of the political, trade union and social organizations who are signatories to the Gernika Agreement

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council
BRUSSELS
Mr. José Manuel Durão Barroso
President of the European Commission
BRUSSELS
Mr. Martin Schulz
President of the European Parliament
BRUSSELS

Iruña- Pamplona, 7 December 2012

Dear Mr. President of the European Council; Dear Mr. President of the European Commission; Dear Mr. President of the European Parliament:

We are writing to you about the recent Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the European Union. As Basque and European citizens we are delighted, and we congratulate you as heads of the European Union.

Naturally each citizen and organization has their own views on the specific policies implemented by the European Union in the various fields in which it is active; having said that, it is an undeniable fact that, in a steady trend, the European Common Project has furthered the cause of peace and of civil and human rights.

In this place in Europe – the Basque Country – the last political conflict within the Union is still going on. However, recent developments have given us fresh hope that normalization and peace are possible, and we would like you to know that:

Firstly.- The conflict we are going through in this European enclave called the Basque Country has causes of a political nature, and at the bottom of them is the denial of our national rights as a People. One aspect of this political conflict has been decades-long violent confrontation. Over the past 50 years there have been acts of violence in both States (France, Spain) that have led to a total of over 1400 deaths, thousands of people injured, a number of missing persons, some 10,000 people tortured and tens of thousands of detainees. Of the latter, there are currently about 800 people in prison, most of them serving time hundreds or even thousands of kilometres from their places of origin. However, in recent years steps have been taken to lead this conflict out of the confrontation phase and into a phase of resolution.

Secondly.- The Aiete International Conference, held a year ago now, agreed on five points. In Point One the Conference called upon ETA to publicly declare a permanent end to armed activity. In Point Two it urged the governments of Spain and France, if such a declaration were forthcoming, to welcome it and agree to engage in discussions on the consequences of the armed conflict. In response to that demand by the International Observers, ETA announced a permanent end to armed struggle. In contrast, not only have the Governments of Spain and France not engaged in discussions on the consequences of the conflict, they have also acted contrary to good sense and to international dispute-resolution standards by continuing with the arrests, torture and acts of police brutality and by continuing to resort to emergency measures and legislation, even ignoring the steady stream of rulings that have come from the ECHR. Thus they have squandered the opportunity to set aside emergency justice and repression and to move forward towards peace and resolution.

Thirdly.- The vast majority of Basque citizens are of one mind that the time has come to peacefully settle this conflict that has caused so much suffering. Since the European Union is a leader in peace-making – witness the award of the Nobel Peace Prize and the Union's active participation in dispute resolution both within and without its own territory – and since the Basque conflict is a European conflict, both because it has affected European citizens and because it has arisen within two member states, we, the Gernika

Agreement signatories, wish to ask of you:

1. That the European Union invite Member States France and Spain to deal with the consequences of the Basque conflict by applying international dispute-resolution standards.
2. Should they not do so, that the European Union lead that phase of the peace process which consists of settling the conflict, as a party involved in it.
3. That the Union call upon the States to undertake to respect human rights, to desist from resorting to emergency legislation, and to comply with and implement the ECHR's rulings.

Looking forward to hearing from you, we thank you in advance.

Yours,
The political, trade union and social organizations who are signatories to the Gernika Agreement Basque politicians' letter on EU institutions and Basque peace

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Press release

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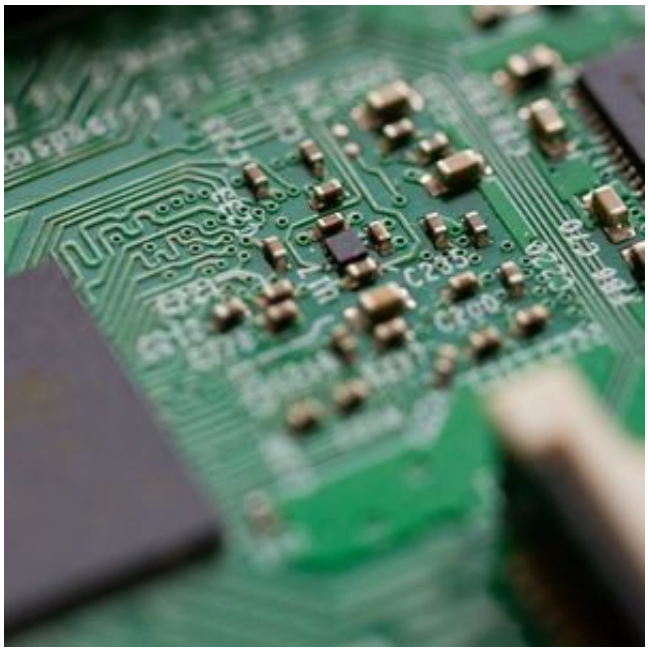


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