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Developments in the Basque Peace process

EFA MEPs Alfonsi, Demesmaeker, Irazabalbeitia and Zdanoka react

Several MEPs from the EFA Group in the European Parliament have given their response to recent significant developments in the peace process in the Basque Country.

This includes notably the announcement of a beginning to disarmament by ETA and the subsequent interrogation of members of the independent International Verification Committee by the Spanish authorities. The MEPs who have been supporters of the peace process gave their response and outlined the challenges for the EU at a press conference in Strasbourg.

The MEPs taking part were François Alfonsi (Corsica), Mark Demesmaeker (Flanders), Inaki Irazabalbeitia (Basque Country) and Tatjana Zdanoka (Latvia).

Inaki Irazabalbeitia said:

"The International Verification Commission confirmed on Friday that ETA had placed a quantity of its arms beyond use and intended to fully disarm within a year. This is very good news and an important step forward.

"Unfortunately the Spanish government's response has been predictably disappointing. They have failed to welcome or seize this opportunity and have instead taken the provocative act of summoning the International Verification Commission's inspectors to court. The French government has also failed to behave positively. This is in contrast to the Basque government whose President accompanied the inspectors to court. I call once more upon the European Union to engage in the Basque peace process. They cannot sit idly by as the Spanish and French governments continually block the path to peace."

François Alfonsi said:

"Following the EU Court of Justice ruling last year on prison sentences, the EU is already concerned with and involved in the Basque peace process. How can we tolerate that those international inspectors involved in bringing peace to the Basque Country should be summoned to court by the Spanish authorities? This behaviour runs totally contrary to European values. I welcome the steps taken by ETA and the Basque people to end violence and resolve this conflict peacefully, and I condemn the behaviour of the Spanish authorities."

Mark Demesmaeker said:

"The disarmament announcement was a significant step forward which Spain cannot ignore. The EU must engage in this peace process as it did in Northern Ireland and help the path to peace. There the EU helped with economic development and social projects, and it is now engaging in helping resolve conflicts worldwide. It's now time to engage in the Basque peace process. I propose that the EU should send a peace delegation to the Basque Country to help end Europe's last armed conflict."

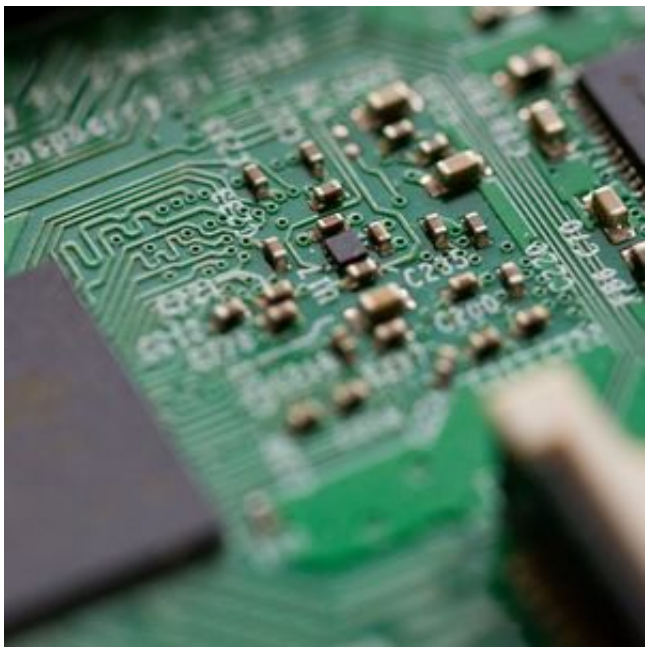
Tatjana Zdanoka said:

"We have all been following recent developments in Ukraine, and we should perhaps compare and contrast the EU's engagement there, and its silence on the Basque peace process. Has the EU done all it can to help the Basque Country at this time? The answer is clearly no. We ask the EU to become actively involved in helping bring peace to the Basque Country. We will table questions to the European Commission to ask what steps will be undertaken in that regard."

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