

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Spain: Amnesty International condemns Madrid bombing

Amnesty International strongly condemns the latest bomb attack in Madrid that reportedly injured 42 people as a betrayal of basic principles of humanity.

A car bomb exploded in the morning of 9 February 2005 near the Juan Carlos I Convention Centre hours before a scheduled visit by King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia. Police in Spain say a caller claiming to be from the Basque armed group, Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), told a newspaper half an hour in advance that the group was planning to explode a device in the vicinity. The police began to cordon off the area; however, at least 42 people were injured, including at least five police officers.

Background information

The attack happened on the same day as police arrested 14 suspected members of ETA in the Basque Country (Pais Vasco), Navarre and Valencia. Last week the Spanish parliament rejected a plan (Ibarretxe Plan) put forward by the Basque regional parliament for greater autonomy for the Basque Country.

Amnesty International unequivocally condemns the targeting of civilians by armed groups and has done so repeatedly in the context of Spain. In January 2003, after the pre-electoral shooting of a Socialist Party activist, the organization called on ETA to renounce once and for all its attempts to stifle freedom of expression in the Basque Country with shootings, bombings and campaigns of intimidation (AI Index: EUR 41/001/2003). The organization previously called on ETA to put an end to its campaign of deliberate killings of civilians (AI Index: EUR 41/007/2000) and has made numerous public appeals.