

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Spain: Amnesty International condemns ETA's campaign of threats and deliberate killings of representatives of political parties

London - In light of the recent statement by the Basque armed group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom, ETA) claiming responsibility for the murder on 7 March this year of former councillor Isaías Carrasco, Amnesty International reiterates its condemnation of the killing and ETA's planned campaign threatening representatives of political parties and the press.

On 2 April 2008 the Basque newspaper *Gara* carried an announcement by ETA that it had shot dead Isaías Carrasco, a former socialist city councillor, and that it was responsible for four other attacks involving bombings in recent months. In the same statement ETA threatened members of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), saying: *"Do PSOE's members believe that ETA is going to stand with its arms folded while there are tortures, arrests and life sentences or parties are banned with total impunity?"*. The statement also made threats against the Nationalist Basque Party (EAJ-PNV) and the public radio television network in the Basque Country (Euskal Irrati Telebista – EITB).

The long history of human rights abuses committed by ETA means that this public threat of attacks against civilians is of grave concern.

Amnesty International has consistently condemned the human rights abuses committed by ETA and has categorically refuted any arguments or objectives which attempt to justify grave abuses of human rights.

In view of this, Amnesty International reiterates its calls on ETA to put a definitive and immediate end to its campaign of such killings, threats and other human rights abuses.

Background information

ETA has been responsible for the deaths of more than 800 people, including police officers and soldiers, during its campaign for independence for almost four decades. In May 2005 the Spanish parliament approved the opening of a dialogue between the government and those "who abandon violence". This was followed in March 2006 by the announcement of a "permanent ceasefire" by ETA, who stated that the aim of their decision was "to drive a democratic process in the Basque country...in which our rights as a people are recognized."

Tensions surrounding the dialogue process increased after an outbreak of violence in the Basque region in September that year and the theft of some 350 pistols from a French arms depot at the end of October. On 30 December 2006 a bomb exploded in the car park at Madrid Barajas airport, killing two people. An hour before the explosion ETA had telephoned a warning about the bomb. The government subsequently announced that the dialogue was over.

On 5 June 2007 ETA declared its "permanent ceasefire" over and resumed bomb attacks. On 24 August that year a car bomb exploded outside the Civil Guard station in Durango in the

Basque Country, causing damage to property but no casualties. On 9 October the bodyguard of a Basque counsellor was injured in a further bomb attack. On 1 December, two unarmed Spanish Civil Guard officers were shot and killed by suspected ETA members in France.

In its statement of 2 April this year ETA also claimed responsibility for four other attacks involving bombings in recent months. Three of these were in the Basque Country: at a court room in Bergara on 8 February, at a telecommunications tower in Vizcaya province on 23 February, and at the local offices of the Basque Socialist Party (which is part of PSOE) in Derio on 29 February. The fourth attack on a Civil Guard building in Calahorra on 21 March injured one officer.