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SPAIN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS MURDER OF FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

Amnesty International condemns this morning's killing of Francisco Tomás y Valiente, Professor of Law at the Autonomous University in Madrid, who was shot dead by an armed gunman, believed to be a member of the Basque armed group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA).

Francisco Tomás y Valiente was the President of the Constitutional Court, Spain's highest judicial tribunal, between 1986 and 1992 and was a permanent member of the Council of State, the key consultative body advising the government.

"We unreservedly condemn abuses by armed political groups such as kidnapping, deliberate and unlawful killings and hostage-taking which go against international humanitarian standards," Amnesty International said.

The shooting took place in his office at 11am this morning, shortly before he was to give a lecture. The gunman shot him three times, reportedly once in the head and twice in the body. He died in the university while attempts were being made to revive him.

No one has yet claimed responsibility for the murder but the reported circumstances bear all the hallmarks of an operation by ETA. A spokesperson for the Ministry of the Interior stated that the assailant had probably been identified as a wanted member of ETA belonging to the Madrid commando. Photographs of six wanted persons of this commando have been publicly displayed since the end of January. The ammunition used was of the type habitually employed by ETA.

This latest killing follows the murder in San Sebastian on 6 March by ETA of Fernando Múgica Herzog, a lawyer and former chairman of the Socialist Party in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa, a close friend of Prime Minister Felipe González and the brother of the former Minister of Justice, Enrique Múgica Herzog.

These two murders come at a time of increased high profile activity by ETA since the end of 1995 against distinguished public figures. Amnesty International has called for the immediate release of José Maria Aldaya, a Basque businessman, and José António Ortega, a prison officer, who have been held hostage by ETA since May 1995 and January 1996.

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For further information on José Maria Aldaya and José António Ortega, see AI Index EUR 41/03/96.