

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Spain: Scale of killings is a potential crime against humanity**

The massacre in Madrid yesterday, which caused at least 198 deaths and injured over 1460 people, could constitute a crime against humanity under international law, the Amnesty International confirmed today. The organization expressed its outrage at the attacks and its deepest sympathy for the victims, their relatives and loved ones.

The scale of the attacks - in which 10 nearly simultaneous explosions blasted four trains as they approached three different Madrid railway stations during the early morning rush hour - was unprecedented in Spain. They are among the most serious to take place in a European Union country.

"Targeting commuters going about their daily business shows complete contempt for the most fundamental principles of humanity. If these bombings are part of a widespread attack on the civilian population of Spain in furtherance of an organization's policy, they would constitute a crime against humanity," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International called for the perpetrators to be brought promptly to justice in proceedings which meet international standards. "We must be compassionate in our support for the victims, determined in our search for justice and vigilant about the rights of all people," the organization said.

The Spanish government implicated in the attack the Basque armed group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), which has previously targeted civilians. However, the Government was keeping other lines of investigation open and was not ruling out other possibilities.

### **Background information**

The sequence of bombings on 11 March occurred during the early morning rush hour, inside commuter trains that were arriving at the stations of Atocha, El Pozo and Santa Eugenia. Ten out of 13 bombs exploded. The multiple bombings came during the Spanish general election campaign. All political parties suspended their electoral activities and three days of mourning were declared.

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.

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