

SPAIN:
AN OPEN LETTER FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TO THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HERRI BATASUNA

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London, 16 July 1997

It has come to our attention that you recently published a list on your Website of organizations who you claim support your campaign of opposition to the imprisonment of the Herri Batasuna board of directors in the event that they are condemned in the forthcoming trial on charges of collaborating with an armed band, namely ETA. The name of Amnesty International's United Nations office in Geneva (*Amnistía Internacional, Ginebra*) is included on this list. I can inform you that the Representative of Amnesty International to the United Nations in Geneva categorically rejects the truth of the statement on your Website that "All those who sign have opposed the imprisonment of the Board of HB" ("*Todos los que suscriben se han opuesto al encarcelamiento de la directiva de HB*").

Amnesty International is a politically impartial organization, working to prevent some of the gravest violations by governments of people's fundamental human rights. It also unreservedly condemns abuses by armed political groups, such as hostage-taking, deliberate and arbitrary killings and others, which contravene international humanitarian standards. Consequently, on 11 July 1997 Amnesty International issued a news release strongly condemning ETA for taking Miguel Ángel Blanco Garrido hostage and for threatening to murder him if the Spanish Government did not meet their demands. The organization's news release was an appeal to save his life and condemned ETA's actions as a contravention of international humanitarian standards.

As an organization Amnesty International is, under its Statute, independent of any government, political party or religious organization and therefore it does not support or oppose any government or political party, nor does it support or oppose the views of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. It is concerned solely with the protection, under its mandate and international humanitarian law, of the human rights of the individual in each case, regardless of the ideology of the government or opposition forces, or the beliefs of the individual in question.

The Representative of Amnesty International to the United Nations in Geneva regularly meets a great number of organizations, governments and representatives of various opposition groups. A delegation from Herri Batasuna met our Representative to give her a compilation of their latest information and nothing more took place.

I therefore request you immediately, on receipt of this letter, to delete the name of "Amnesty International, Geneva" from the list of organizations opposing the imprisonment of the directors of Herri Batasuna on the Website and to further refrain from mentioning Amnesty International in such a context in the future.

I will be requesting the Spanish Section of Amnesty International in Madrid to add a copy of this letter to their Website, for information.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Burley
Program Director
Europe Region
International Secretariat