

Prison for five Egunkaria staff members

Spanish judge Juan del Olmo sent to prison five of the people arrested last Thursday on the raid against the Basque-language newspaper Egunkaria. Xabier Alegria, Xabier Oleaga, Juan Mari Torrealdei, Txema Auzmendi and Iñaki Uria were accused of “helping or being members of ETA”. According to Del Olmo, 10 documents confiscated to ETA would prove that Egunkaria was created 13 years ago “to promote terrorist ideas”.

Egunkaria has denied all accusations and has said that they are “baseless and absurd”.

Egunkaria’s director Martxelo Otamendi and other three former senior members of the staff were as well sent to Soto del Real (Madrid) prison, but they all will be released as soon as they pay a warranty. In similar cases, Spanish Courts usually keeps the people arrested until they pay the warranties, but in this case, they were sent to prison first hand. Martxelo Otamendi has to pay 30.000 euros, 18.000 euros former manager Fermin Lazkano and Board of Directors former member Luis Goia, and 12.000 euros Egunkaria’s first managing director, Inma Gomila. They are all expected tomorrow (Wednesday) back in the Basque Country.

Former director in hospital

Former director Pello Zubiria is under arrest at a hospital in Madrid, due to complications in his very delicate health. Zubiria suffers from a chronic disease and according to police sources, was sent to hospital last Saturday. The same sources have said that Zubiria tried to commit suicide with a pillow case. As the arrested were

incommunicated, Zubiria's family didn't know anything until Monday afternoon. Hospital sources did not want to talk to them and only declared that "his life was not in danger". Del Olmo will interrogate Zubiria as soon as the doctors declare him fit to do it so. The other nine people arrested were not allowed to see their legal representatives until Tuesday afternoon.

Meeting with Basque president

Egunkaria's workers' representative, Juan Mari Larrarte declared on Tuesday afternoon that Del Olmo's decision did not come as a surprise, "because we expected the worst". At night, Egunkaria members and supporters gathered in all the main Basque cities (Bilbao, Pamplona, San Sebastian, Vitoria and Bayonne) to protest against the imprisonment of five of their colleagues.

At 18.00, representatives of the newspaper met the president of the Basque Autonomous Region, Juan Jose Ibarretxe. The Basque Government has fund the paper since 1994, and amid strong criticism from Aznar's People's Party, has declared it will keep doing it. Three ministers of the Basque Government took part in the massive demonstration held on Saturday in Donostia-San Sebastian to protest against the closure of Egunkaria..