

61 MPs in the Spanish Parliament call for the Egunkaria case to be dropped



Bruxelles - Brussel, Friday, 21 October 2005 by Davyth Hicks

In a joint statement on Wednesday 61 representatives of the Spanish Congress and Senate (lower and upper house of the Spanish Parliament, respectively) called for the case against the Basque newspaper Egunkaria to be dropped. Egunkaria was closed down in 2003 by the then PP government over alleged links with ETA.

With the exception of the ruling PSOE and the opposition PP, 37 deputies and 24 senators of all the other parties signed the statement.

They were the elected representatives of the Catalan parties the CiU, ERC, IU and ICV, the Basque parties EAJ, EA and Nafarroa Bai, the Galician BnG, the Canary Island autonomists the CC, and the Aragonese CHA.

This statement by the deputies and senators comes at a moment when the Spanish National Criminal Court is about to take an important decision connected with the trial. Although no definite date has been fixed yet, a court session is due to take place soon on the appeals filed against the indictments.

Afterwards, the Criminal Chamber will have to decide whether to proceed with the case or not. If the panel of judges dismisses the appeals, the seven indictees (Xabier Alegria, Txema Auzmendi, Xabier Oleaga, Martxelo Otamendi, Iñaki Uriá, Joan Mari Torrealdai and Pello Zubiria) will be heading for the dock.

The 61 representatives of the Spanish Congress and Senate stated in their declaration that after two and a half years of pre-trial proceedings the judge had "no proof whatsoever" for maintaining the charges, so "there are no clear, specific and sufficiently firm grounds for keeping the case open".

The Basque newspaper Berria reports that the elected representatives argued that the newspaper had been closed down as a result of the political pressure by the previous PP government, and as the political pressure is absent now and "on the basis of the independence of the judiciary", the correct thing to do would be to close the case. In the view of the MPs who have signed up to the document, such a decision would contribute, firstly, towards "correcting the political pressure" applied while the PP was in power, and secondly, "towards furthering the Basque Country's political normalisation and progress along the road to peace".

Also on Wednesday Egunkaria indictees Xabier Oleaga, Iñaki Uriá and Martxelo Otamendi, together with their lawyer Iñigo Iruin, had a meeting with the deputies and senators to discuss the details of the case. (Eurolang © 2005)

Berria, Basque newspaper <http://www.berria.info/azala.php>