

ABERRI EGUNA 2002



UDALBILTZA[®]
EUSKAL HERRIKO UDAL ETA HAUTETSIEEN BILTZARRA

**RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS:
The central point of the freedom of our people**

The Aberri Eguna is being held on the 31st of March in the Casa de Juntas of Bizkaia, beneath the Tree of Gernika.

On the 15th of April 2002, on the occasion of the holding of the Aberri Eguna, we, the group of municipally-elected councillors at UDALBILTZA, wish to show our unequivocal commitment to humanitarian principles and the defence of the rights and freedoms of the individual. Values which are deep-rooted in the basic fundamentals of our institution.

A year ago, we declared that "violence and national construction are incompatible" and that "means and ends are linked to the same axis: exclusively democratic political action."

Today, when we are holding a new Aberri Eguna and while at the same time we reiterate those principles, we affirm the existence of a people, the Basque People, with its own personality and will; a people which constitutes the Basque nation, which has the right to be recognized as it is and to form part of a future united Europe, on an equal footing with other European nations. A Basque People made up of all those people who live in this country regardless of our sentiments in terms of national belonging or of our political national identity.

Faced with states which insist on imposing uniform models of national belonging, we proclaim the guarantee of free adherence to national realities and the peoples of Europe, through the incorporation of the right of self-determination for all European peoples at the core of the construction of the European Union.

We are committed to policies, through in-depth democratic means, which seek to consolidate fair political systems and a sustainable economy developed on more just foundations of wealth redistribution and as a defender of social conquests. Likewise, we advocate the real and effective defence of human rights, equality among peoples and the struggle against all types of discrimination.

We, the group of municipally-elected councillors from the seven Basque territories at UDALBILTZA, on this day of the Aberri Eguna, remember all those people who have suffered any type of threat, aggression or restriction of their freedoms; and in particular, Basque councillors, our colleagues, who have been killed by ETA since UDALBILTZA was set up: Jesus Mari Pedrosa (Councillor of Durango), Manuel Indiano (Councillor of Zumarraga), Froilán Elespe (Deputy Mayor of Lasarte), José Javier Múgica (Councillor of Leizta) and Juan Priede (Councillor of Orío).

"We condemn those who assess and use life and death according to the benefit or harm that this may cause to their political strategy. Those who think and act by the logic of death, physically eliminating the political opponent and fellow citizen, who have contempt for life, the basic rights of the individual and the life of the people."

"The Basque People does not need anyone to establish themselves by interpreting their political aspirations through the logic of violence." We understand that the moment has arrived in which both the ETA leadership and its activists should overcome the secular contempt which they have shown towards the will of the people whom they themselves claim to defend, and to recognize the harm that they cause the Basque people and themselves in all respects.

The exercising of honesty, intelligence and courage is needed on the part of all, to act responsibly in view of history and in view of our people. If ETA is to proceed with its current deadly strategy, we as municipally-elected councillors of this people demand that they withdraw their use of the concepts of Euskadi and Askatasuna (Freedom) from their symbols.

We must create political and social conditions for promoting and developing an authentic peace process and a democratic political solution. Although the current situation does not invite much optimism, we wish, as Basque municipally-elected councillors, to show our people that we are not resigned to fatalism and that we are not facing an impossible task.

Therefore, neither dejection nor desisting. Basque citizens - men and women - have the right; we have the right, to peace and political normalization. We must definitively rule out strategies from the past which have already failed and which may arise and take shape again. Strategies of political and social isolation which lead us to pre-democratic situations involving political banning, constant violence

and actions and reactions that entail infringements of rights, torture and, in short, strategic resistance to change.

It is necessary, to the proper extent and in the proper direction, to demand the following:

- Is ETA able to bring about definitive détente by its own decision?
- Would such a decision constitute an exercise in respecting the word of Euskal Herria?
- Are the Spanish and French Governments able to recognize the existence of a people, the Basque People, subject to rights which may freely and democratically articulate their future?
- Are both Governments able to contribute towards the humanization of the conflict by putting an end to a penitentiary policy of a clearly vindictive nature?
- Does it prove impossible to imagine a multiparty and inter-institutional process of dialogue capable of contributing towards an agreement or agreements as regards political normalization?
- Does it prove impossible for all - Governments and political parties - to assume the commitment to the acceptance of what Basque citizens may choose to decide freely, clearly and democratically, without limits, demands or excluding anyone?

A political and peace process of the type demanded by Basque society requires the participation of all; it is something that we owe to those who came before us and those who will follow us, we owe it to all us Basques, aware of contributing towards the best investment our native land needs.

GORA EUSKADI ASKATUTA!

LONG LIVE THE BASQUE COUNTRY!

In Euskal Herria, on the 30th of March 2002