

# UDALBILTZA<sup>®</sup>

## INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATIONS 2003



EUSKAL HERRIKO UDAL ETA UDAL HAUTETSIEIEN BILTZARRA

## **INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION IN VIEW OF THE CLOSURE OF EUSKALDUNON EGUNKARIA**

The 1th of March 2003

Institutional Declaration in view of the closure of EUSKALDUNON EGUNKARIA (the Basque language newspaper closed by the Spanish authorities). UDALBILTZA declares its commitment to promoting the newspaper in Euskara for freedom of expression, freedom of information and Euskera. UDALBILTZA (EAJ-PNV/EA), with its reiterated and unequivocal commitment to the defence of basic rights of all people:

1. Condemns the violation of freedom of expression and of freedom of information, as well as the attack which has for Euskera and for our culture resulted in the closure of the Basque language daily newspaper Euskaldunon Egunkaria.
2. Declares its solidarity with the management and workers of the company concerned.
3. Condemns the clear political intent of these initiatives and the lack of democratic accountability in the actions taken by the judiciary, which is becoming increasingly more subject to the impulses of political power.
4. Reiterates its firm vocation to continue acting in favour of peace, freedom and the development of the Basque People, based on respect for all human rights, against torture and ill-treatment, the essential easing of tension, dialogue and negotiation.
5. Demands the immediate reopening of the newspaper Euskaldunon Egunkaria.

Consequently, UDALBILTZA declares its decision to help towards:

"enabling Euskaldunon Egunkaria to restart its activity with complete normality, in the event that the newspaper should be reopened, or " encouraging the setting-up of a new daily and press in Euskera, in the event that the unjust closure should remain in force.

This decision entails commitments of different types. Thus, as far as economic matters are concerned, UDALBILTZA shall develop different activities through Basque town halls.

The initiatives shall be notified through an explanatory letter to the town halls of the seven territories in the coming days. This letter shall inform about the global economic objective and propose financial contributions which each municipality should make in proportion to the population.

In Euskal Herria, 1th of March 2003

## **INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION IN VIEW OF THE BANNING OF EH/HB/BATASUNA**

The 17th of March 2003

We, women and men, municipally-elected councillors of UDALBILTZA (EAJ-PNV/EA), unequivocally committed to the defence of life and other basic rights and by showing respect for plurality in our society, aware of our level of representation and of the will of the citizens who freely elected us, set out the following considerations in view of the decision of the Spanish Supreme Court to ban the political organization HB/EH/Batasuna:

1. This decision is a direct attacks on ideological freedom, by putting limits on the defence and dissemination of political projects, and entails an unprecedented aggression against political pluralism which constitutes the core itself of the democratic system, pluralism, in so far as it bans certain political ideas because of the content of their project.
2. This decision is a setback to the set of guarantees governed by the legal-criminal code, circumventing the principle that it is individuals who commit crimes rather than political parties.
3. It means another clampdown against the system of public freedoms.
4. We do not accept that the extreme social tension and desperation caused by ETA violence and which we condemn, enables a decision to be taken which is not going to contribute towards peace and normalize the political life of our people. To the contrary, it will reinforce the argument of those who state the impossibility of defending all political demands at the core of a democratic system which is growing increasingly weak and conditioned. It will also reinforce the position of those who continue to fail to resort exclusively to political channels; it will polarize society, intensify confrontation and sow the seeds of social fracture.

5. This decision, as part of a more profound and far-reaching strategy, attempts to leave a major part of our society without representation and seeks the political destabilization, agitation and confrontation of our people.

6. UDALBILTZA urges the State authorities to respect the will of the majority of our society which is institutionally, politically and socially articulated.

7. UDALBILTZA declares its commitment towards the construction of a plural and integrated society based on the firm defence of human rights, leaving aside isolationist dynamics which attempt to ban ideas and seriously destabilise our people.

8. To this end, UDALBILTZA maintains its firm attitude of commitment towards rapprochement, dialogue and agreement as an instrument which is incompatible with intolerance and as a suitable means for solving the conflict which grips us all by political normalization and coexistence.

In Euskal Herria, 17th of March 2003

## **INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION IN VIEW OF THE POLICE OPERATION CARRIED OUT EARLY AGAINST THE ASSEMBLY OF MUNICIPALLY-ELECTED COUNCILLORS BELONGING TO THE IZQUIERDA ABERTZALE**

The 29th of April 2003

Institutional Declaration in view of the police operation carried out early this morning against the Assembly of Municipally-Elected Councillors belonging to the izquierda abertzale (the Basque nationalist left) and which has resulted in the arrest of several people – some of them councillors – and the closure of several premises. Y In view of the police operation carried out this morning against the Assembly of Municipally-Elected Councillors belonging to the izquierda abertzale (the Basque nationalist left) and which has resulted in the arrest of several people – some of them councillors – and the closure of several premises, UDALBILTZA wishes to declare the following:

1 - UDALBILTZA is an Institution made up of municipally-elected councillors of Euskal Herria; it was set up on the 18th of March 1999 to work in favour of an Euskal Herria that would be its own master in an increasingly more interrelated and open Europe and world, and taking as a basis the scrupulous respect for the human rights of all people. Therefore, attempting to involve it in the 18/98 indictment of ETA-EKIN by making out that it is an Institution set up by said organization is a complete fabrication of the truth.

2 – Regardless of discrepancies regarding condemnations or not of violence, apart from the fact that there was a time when UDALBILTZA disregarded municipally-elected councillors from the izquierda abertzale (Basque nationalist left) due, in our opinion, to their insufficient response to blatant violations of human rights committed by ETA, the operation early this morning constitutes a direct attack against ideological freedom by putting limits on the defence and dissemination of political projects, and entails a new aggression against political pluralism in so far as it bans certain political ideas because of the content of their project. We should like to once again recall that it is individuals who commit crimes rather than political organizations. This operation is, in short, another clampdown against the system of public freedoms.

3 - Deep-down, we are facing a new aggression which forms part of a strategy designed to destabilise, agitate and cause an even more acute confrontation at the core of our People. It is a strategy which, as we pointed out in our Manifesto on the Aberri Eguna Day this year, has been developed attacking what is Basque, Euskera and any project that may base itself legitimately on the approach of an integrated, open and plural Euskal Herria, increasingly more self-determined and less dependent on powers outside the will of Basque citizens.

4 - UDALBILTZA reiterates its commitment towards the construction of a plural and integrated society, based on the firm defence of human rights, leaving aside isolationist dynamics which attempt to ban ideas and destabilise our people.

5 - To this end, UDALBILTZA maintains its firm attitude of commitment towards rapprochement, dialogue and agreement as an instrument which is incompatible with intolerance and as a suitable means for solving the conflict which grips us all and causes us so much suffering by political normalization and coexistence.

In Euskal Herria, 29th of April 2003

## **INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION: PRESENTATION of PROGRAM HURBILTZEN**

10<sup>th</sup> of May 2003

BY EUSKAL HERRIA OF THE CITIZENS

We are here for starting up and presenting/displaying program HURBILTZEN publicly. A program, that to UDALBILTZA initiative, it tries to help to the establishment in agreements of related between the municipalities of Euskal Herria, with the purpose of fortifying the bows of union between the Basque citizens.

As all you know, the agreements of related between municipalities and peoples are a practice that has been developed for several decades already. Many of you, many of your municipalities surely have one long and rich experience in this scope.

The related had an especially important development during the decade of years 90 of the last century. To it decisively contributed the firm bet of the European Union that saw in this type in agreements a very important element in the progressive creation of a unique space in our Continent; in the creation, really, of a united Europe that at the same time respected its diversity. A space where the citizens could circulate freely, could deal, travel, etc., but also and fundamentally, had opportunity to be related, to know themselves and to be developing and sharing values after the creation of an European common identity.

In this respect, it is enough with remembering one of the phrases and ideas that better reflect east feeling and spirit. An idea that was transmitted by one of the parents of Europe, insigne politician Jean Monnet, whom with regard to the great objective that marked itself with the unification of Europe, it asserted with as much forcefulness.

Euskal Herria is rich and plural. Our territories have own and also common characteristics to all they, that they have been dreamed up through centuries of history. We have numerous elements that they demonstrate that we formed an historical community. No single by geographic proximity; non single because the dynamics of European integration and the consequent disappearance of the borders approach to us, and our economic, commercial and cultural relations are being increased of natural way; but, because we shared values of base (like the democracy, La Paz, the freedom and the respect to the Human rights) and of course we shared also characteristics that they define to us as Town, like for example the euskera.

One of the primary targets of UDALBILTZA is the one to develop a Euskal Herria with more and bows between its citizens, its municipalities and their territories. We are to the service of the citizens of Euskal Herria; to the service of the integral development like people of the citizens of Euskal Herria. We want, we looked for and we worked by the Euskal Herria of the citizens.

Program HURBILTZEN that today we presented/displayed is one of its instruments. We advocated agreements of related between the municipalities of Euskal Herria with the objective to put in relation to the Basque citizens, to the object to know us better, to appreciate to us, to collaborate and to share values and projects that we have in common whereas Basque. In an opened spirit, respectful and participative. In a totally coherent approach with the process of European integration, suppressing border and constructing bows of solidarity, mutual knowledge and work in common.

For some months, we have been working already in several experimental projects of collaboration, in which a long twenty of city councils of all the Basque territories is participating. They are Artea (653), Asteasu, Ataun, Azkaine, Azpeitia, Bakio, Beasain, Must, Getxo, Heleta, Kanbo, Lazkao, Lekunberri, Lesaka, Muskiz, Oion, Ordizia and Sara. There are other city councils that are arranged to participate, but have still not begun to work in group. In this case they are: Bertizarana, Ituren, Lapuebla de Labarca, Milafranga, Mungia, Sunbilla and Urruña.

It is being procured which in each group they take part, at least, a municipality of the Basque Independent Community, one of the Leasehold Community of Navarre and another one of Iparralde. The collaboration agreements are led by the City councils, that act impelling and mediating a as. But they are the Basque citizens, through different associations and cultural, economic, social, sport groups, etc. that carry out the related.

The subjects that are repeated more in related groups are: euskara, the education and the training centers, youth, the third age, the municipal management, the sport, the tourism, the leisure, the gastronomy, the products craftsmen, music, the dance, the painting and the crafts. Each municipality chooses the areas and the projects of collaboration based on its necessities, their interests and their will.

Through program HURBILTZEN we offer to the all participant municipalities financing and professional technical consultant's office. Dear friends, we yearned for to construct and to weave solidarity and union bows. With respect and in freedom. But being conscious that we are contributing our contribution to a world, a Europe and a Euskal Herria peacefully, freedom and concord.

Eskerrik asko

In Euskal Herria, to 10th of May 2003

## **INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INSTITUTION**

18th of September 2003

On the 18th of September 1999, Udalbiltza was set up in the Euskalduna Palace in Bilbao. Therefore, we are today celebrating the fourth anniversary of the first municipally-based Basque national institution. Udalbiltza will shortly be holding its General Assembly, with the aim of renewing its Executive Board and ratifying its principles.

The situation and political climate in which Udalbiltza came into being has radically changed. This people of ours have experienced many events and alterations throughout these last four years. Some very hard and other, more pleasant ones. I am not going to recount to you all of these events in this document. We are all more or less familiar with what they are, at least the most important ones. Conversely, I wish today to corroborate the commitments of Udalbiltza and remind you what they are.

Those of us who make up Udalbiltza are municipally-elected councillors. Yet, instead of thinking and acting not just as mayors and councillors, our conduct is that of being elected Basques. In fact, leaving aside theoretical formulations as to a unified political structure and taking respect and solidarity as a starting point, nations that are based on associative and federative principles and that are built from bottom to top always become stronger and stronger. They neither divide nor weaken.

We vehemently declare our defence of the fundamental rights of all human beings, in the same way that we respect all the political options and traditions which exist in our people. It is essential for us and without any doubt; we believe it to be the correct path to follow. Once again, we will continue condemning any aggression against human rights. In fact, nowadays and viewing it from the democratic standpoint, any political project which clearly lacks ethical fundamentals is unviable.

In many Basque territories, different fundamental aspects of our collective personality, such as Euskera for instance, are suffering institutional neglect, aggression and persecution. We, as we have been doing throughout these last four years, do not accept this situation and refuse to allow it. It is the duty of everyone not to accept it. Likewise, as a consequence of decisions taken by the Spanish and French states, an attempt is being made to impede relations, collaboration and decision-making among Basques. In short, they wish to prevent the development of our personality and our survival as a people. We Basques often work together with peoples from other parts of the world. Can't we do the same in Zuberoa, the Left Bank of Bilbao, the Bidasoa River, Treviño, la Rivera or the Basque Rioja? Why not? Aren't we members of the same country? What harm is done by the work we have been carrying out in the fields of infrastructures, territorial planning, the environment, education, the economy, industrial promotion, language and cultural policy?

Right now, French and Spanish political-legal frameworks are shielded against changes which might entail the recognition of national diversity. Our aim is clear: to overcome these difficulties and widen the aforementioned frameworks by backing and promoting values and, with the support of the majority of citizens, develop a transition towards another new political framework through a feasible, specific project.

We propose the establishment of a political project of great scope, and we are clear in our minds that the initiatives geared towards social and political transformation require planning, time to mature, trust on the part of society and the voluntary adherence of Basque citizens.

We are putting forward our aim and commitment towards providing a framework of sovereignty for Euskadi-Euskal Herria, in which the possibility of choice within the globalized and interrelated world in which we live is guaranteed. Our interpretation, from that point of view, is a strategic one, in the same way that the choice as to which path should be followed is only a democratic, peaceful and political one, is also strategic.

The debate has already started. And it will intensify over the coming days and months. We are going to experience and witness political events of great importance. And with the aforementioned principles, Udalbiltza holds out its hands in order to make its contribution.

In Euskal Herria, 18th of September 2003