



international declaration to
free arnaldo otegi
& to bring Basque political prisoners home

Brussels, 24th March 2015



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Five years ago the Basque independence movement began an unprecedented and far reaching debate. That debate concluded with an unequivocal commitment to an exclusively peaceful and democratic pursuit of self-determination for the Basque Country. The movement renounced the use of violence and committed to the goal of ending the long and violent conflict by means of dialogue.

In October of 2011, ETA responded to a call from the *Aiete International Peace Conference* by declaring a definitive end to its 50 years of armed activity, and opening a process of dialogue. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu called Arnaldo Otegi, ex spokesperson of Batasuna and now Secretary General of the political party Sortu, "*the leader of the peace process*". Otegi was the prime mover pressing the independence movement to embrace argument and the power of word as the only means to resolve all conflict.

Unfortunately the Spanish government responded to Otegi's efforts by arresting him in October 2009. He was sentenced to six and a half years in prison for membership of the political party, Batasuna, which had been banned by the Spanish government. Since then, despite the end of ETA's armed activity - including their demonstrated commitment to disarmament, dialogue and reconciliation, including recognition of the suffering of all victims - there is still an absence of any positive response from the Spanish State.

Arnaldo Otegi, whose case has been raised to the European Court of Human Rights, is being held in a Spanish prison far away from his family and friends. The same are the cases of some 500 other Basque prisoners related to this conflict.

They are deliberately dispersed, often in solitary confinement, and all are in prisons long distances from the Basque Country. A reality that brings and added punishment to their families, doomed to travel long distances to visit their loved ones.

We, therefore, call for the immediate release of Arnaldo Otegi, a man who took risks for peace and democracy and who tirelessly persuaded many others to believe in the power of word alone as the mean of resolving this conflict. His release and the end of the dispersal policy, prior to an agreed early release process, are necessary steps to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

For humanity. For justice. Because we believe in a solution without winners and losers. Because we believe in peace.

Because of all this, we ask to Free of Arnaldo Otegi and to bring Basque Political prisoners home to the Basque Country.



José "Pepe" Mujica, Montevideo, 1935.

Senator and former President of Uruguay. Pepe Mujica is member of MPP and Uruguay's Frente Amplio, he was a member of the guerrilla movement MLN-T and was imprisoned for 13 years in very tough conditions.



Fernando Lugo, San Solano, 1951.

Senator and former President of Paraguay. Fernando Lugo is a now laicized catholic bishop. He was destituted through a legal proceeding that has been deemed a Coup d'Etat.



José Manuel Zelaya, Catacamas, 1952.

President of Honduras from 2006 to 2009, he was ousted in the 2009 Coup d'état. He is currently a member in the Central American Parliament.



Lucía Topolansky, Montevideo, 1944.

Senator. Lucía has been acting President on a number of occasions, due to her role as leader of the Senate's main political force. She is member of MPP and Uruguay's Frente Amplio, she was a member of the MLN-T and was imprisoned 12 years. She is candidate to become Montevideo's Mayor in the May 2015 elections.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Klerksdorp, 1931.

Desmond Tutu encouraged nonviolent resistance to the apartheid regime, and advocated an economic boycott of the country, he was jailed briefly in 1980 after a protest march. He was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for his work and was later appointed as Chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission by then President Nelson Mandela.



Mairead Maguire, Belfast, 1944.

Mairead cofounded the Women for Peace, which later became the Community for Peace People, an organisation dedicated to encouraging a peaceful resolution of the Troubles in Ireland, she was awarded the Peace Nobel for her work, as well as the Norwegian People's Peace Prize, Carl von Ossietzky Medal and the Pacem in Terris award.



Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Buenos Aires, 1931.

Adolfo was secretary-general of Servicio Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice Service or SERPAJ) a group that coordinates nonviolent movements in the region. In 1977, he himself was “disappeared” and was imprisoned and tortured by the Argentinean military for 14 months. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his leadership for human rights and true democracy for the people of Latin America.



Ahmed Kathrada, Schweizer-Reneke, 1929.

Ahmed Mohamed Kathrada was one of the leaders of the non-racial, anti-apartheid struggle. Alongside Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela, he spent almost three decades in prison, most of them on Robben Island. When he was released, he launched the Release Mandela Campaign. He is a retired Member of Parliament, and served as President Mandela’s Parliamentary Counsellor during Mandela’s term of office.



Angela Davis, Birmingham, Alabama, 1944.

Angela Davis is a retired professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She was a leader of the Communist Party USA, and had close relations with the Black Panther Party. Her party membership led to Ronald Reagan's request in 1969 to have her barred from teaching at any university in the State of California. The "Free Angela Davis, Free all political prisoners" campaign was launched after she was imprisoned for the Marin County courthouse incident.



Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Mexico City, 1934.

Cuauhtémoc is the former Head of Government of the Federal District (He was the first to be democratically elected), founder of the Party of the Democratic Revolution, he has stood three times as presidential candidate and is an Honorary President of the Socialist International.



Gerry Adams, Belfast, 1948.

President of Sinn Féin and TD for Louth. Gerry Adams was part of the Sinn Féin negotiation team for the Good Friday Agreement. He is a former republican prisoner, he was interned in 1972 and imprisoned again in 1973 in Long Kesh.



Leyla Zana, Silvan, Diyarbakır Province, 1961.

She was the first Kurdish woman to become Member of the Turkish Parliament. She was imprisoned for 10 years, she was awarded the Rafto Prize, and was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European parliament. She also won the Bruno Kreisky Award.



Leila Khaled, Haifa, 1944.

Leila Khaled is Member of the Palestinian National Council and the PFLP. Part of the Palestine Liberation Organization she is a well known Palestinian activist. She lives in Amman.



Ken Livingstone, Lambeth, London, 1945.

He is a former Member of Parliament and has held twice the leading political role in London local government (as the Leader of the Greater London Council and as 1st Mayor) Livingstone has strongly supported republicanism, LGBT rights and a United Ireland as well as being clearly opposed to war.



Nora Morales de Cortiñas, Buenos Aires, 1930.

Nora is a cofounder of Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, she is the president of Madres de la Plaza de Mayo Linea Fundadora and a recognised activist for Human Rights, as such she has received several honoris causa degrees.



Reverend Harold Good, Derry, 1937.

President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, he was one of two independent witnesses, the other being Father Alec Reid, who oversaw the decommissioning of arms, a vital part of the peace process in the north of Ireland.



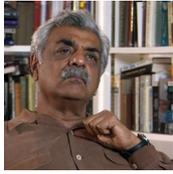
Helmuth Markov, Leipzig, 1952.

Former MEP, Helmuth Markov is Minister of Justice and Europe and Consumer Protection, as well as Deputy Prime Minister in the state of Brandenburg.



Slavoj Žižek, Ljubljana, 1949.

Slavoj is a senior researcher at the Institute for Sociology and Philosophy, University of Ljubljana, Global Distinguished Professor of German at New York University, and international director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities.



Tariq Ali, Lahore, 1943.

Tariq is a writer and filmmaker. He has written more than two dozen books on world history and politics, and seven novels, as well as scripts for the stage and screen. He is an editor of New Left Review, and activist from a young age, he was elected president of the Oxford Union in 1965 and became publicly known for his opposition to the Vietnam war.



Pierre Galand, Uccle, Brussels, 1940.

Defender of human rights and a fierce opponent to political imprisonment and torture as well as former Senator, Mr Galand is the president of the World Organisation against torture OMCT-Europe, the Belgian, Palestinian and Sahraouian solidarity associations and the Forum Nord Sud and member of other associations and grass root organisations.



Gershon Baskin, גרשון בסקין, New York, 1956.

Gershon is the founder and Co-Chairman of IPCRI (Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information) dedicated to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He is also a member of Israeli Palestinian Peace NGO Forum, and of the Israeli Board of One Voice Movement. He has been awarded the Histadrut Prize for Peace, and the Tribute of Honor and Courage from the World Movement for Democracy.



João Pedro Stédile, Lagoa Vermelha, 1953.

National coordinator of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). He is firm defender of the agrarian reform in Brasil.



Carmen Lira, Mexico City, 1942.

Carmen is the editor of La Jornada, the Mexican Newspaper and Professor in UNAM. Carmen Lira was a war correspondent in Nicaragua and foreign correspondent in Washington DC and China.



Fermin Muguruza, Irun, 1963.

Fermin is a Basque musician, singer, songwriter, producer and documentary filmmaker. Fermin Muguruza has been involved in different cultural and musical projects.