



December 2016

Basque Friendship Group Press Release Immediate release of the five non-violent Basque activists

On Friday night, December 16th, five non-violent activists were arrested by the French and Spanish police in Luhuso, Basque Country. The activists had started a process to destroy ETA's weaponry but a police raid was in place to prevent it.

With ETA having officially laid down arms five years ago (October 2011), the French and Spanish government were expected to implement the peace process. Their refusal to do so compromises the entire peace process and this is why the non-violent activists have set an example by doing what the French and Spanish government were actually supposed to do. Currently the French government is keeping the activists under arrest, pretending that they took part in a terrorist action. French civil society demands their immediate release, and asks the international community for support.

Despite the announcement by the Spanish interior Ministry of the seizure of numerous weapons and the arrest of "ETA's legal members" (individuals who wouldn't be underground members of ETA), those arrested turned out to be well-known individuals, Txetx Etcheverry (founder of Bizi, Alternatiba and ANV-COP21), Michel Berhocoirigoin (Former President and Founder of the Basque Chamber of Agriculture Euskal Herriko Laborantza Ganbara), Michel Bergouignan (member of the Irulegi, Basque wine demarcation cooperative), Béatrice Haran-Molle (journalist) and Stéphane Etchegaray "Etxe" (an audiovisual professional, who would have recorded the weapons' destruction).

The arrests have been condemned by the Permanent Social Forum, by [20 elected representatives](#) across whole political spectrum and organisations such as the [Ligue des droits de l'Homme](#) and [Greenpeace](#). A demonstration took place in Baiona on Saturday 17th under the slogan, Release the peace-craftmen! (Libération immédiate des Artisans de la Paix) and a support campaign was launched at : <http://artisansdelapaix.wesign.it>

The Basque Friendship Group wishes to show solidarity with the five detainees and their relatives, as well as request their immediate release. The role of civil society is vital in facilitating orderly disarmament and with full guarantees. We also denounce, once again that these arrests obstruct the peace process in the Basque Country. We show our concern regarding this situation and make a call to the European institutions to take an active part in the search for a lasting and just peace.

*Europe Écologie MEP and Basque Friendship member José Bové's Declaration can be found here: <https://reporterre.net/Nous-demandons-la-liberation-immEDIATE-des-faiseurs-de-paix-du-Pays-Basque>
It has been signed by Pascal DURAND and Yannick JADOT MEPs, among others.*