

Egunkaria's editor tortured by the Guardia Civil.

After being released on Tuesday evening, Egunkaria's editor Martxelo Otamendi has revealed that they have been tortured. He has stated that the Spanish Civil Guards have beaten and suffocated some of them with plastic bags during their incarceration.- Otamendi, Gomila, Goia and Lazkano have been released on bail and Zubiria has yet to be interrogated by the judge.

Martxelo Otamendi, Inma Gomila and Luis Goia were released yesterday, after paying bail. Otamendi denounced torture as soon as he came out of Soto del Real prison in Madrid where he has been held since last Thursday. He said that the Spanish Civil Guard tortured him and that they suffocated him with a bag twice. He underlined that torture had been common practice during the five days during which they have been detained and isolated. Otamendi said that Alegria was also submitted to torture and that the Guardia Civil had fiercely beaten Torrealdai. He denounced Civil Guard "absolute impunity". "They do whatever they want, they have treated us like rats". Civil Guards even told Otamendi during his confinement that Martin Ugalde (writer and honour president of Egunkaria) had died. Ugalde is 84 years old and his bank accounts have been frozen.

Otamendi declared that he had been threatened and insulted all through the isolation days. «From the very beginning, I've been treated cruelly and ruthlessly», he said. "When we were in the cells, we could hear our workmates screaming and even the sound of them being beaten up". Interrogatories were held at any time, and during them, he was pointed at with a pistol and was forced to shout slogans in favour of a united Spain. Insults against the Basque language and Basque Culture minister Miren Azkarate were also commonplace.

Relatives and friends waiting outside of Soto del Real prison had their hearts broken, after judge Luis del Olmo decided to release some detainees on bail and to imprison others. Relatives and friends finally saw Otamendi, Gomila and Goia coming out of jail there were tears of joy but also tears of anger. The feelings of helplessness that relatives endured over the past week finally come to a head. A clearly emotional Martxelo Otamendi started to speak and gave an account of the horrific torture which they were submitted to by the Civil Guard. Looking gaunt and exhausted, it was clear from the faces of these men that they had experienced terrible moments. Apart from his case, he said that he knew that they had suffocated Alegria too with a plastic bag, and he said that the most critical case was Torrealdai's: "They have beaten him a lot". Torrealdai is 60 years old and, according to Otamendi "not suspicious of being a supporter of ETA at all". Otamendi resumed all the sufferings in just one phrase: "It was like some stories we had read about South American dictators".

The bus carrying Otamendi, Goia and friends and relatives of the arrested drove back directly from Madrid, and at 3.00 was back in Egunkaria's central premises, in Andoain (Gipuzkoa). Some of the newspaper's staff were waiting for them and were shocked to see the suffering in the arrested people's faces.

Today at 13.00, Otamendi took part in the protest-gathering held at Egunkaria's main offices. He repeated his accusations against the Guardia Civil and asked Basque people and institutions to react against torture. "This country can't become Pinochet's Chili".

Detained managers and directors

Imprisoned members

Joan Mari Torrealdai: President of the Administrative Council of Egunkaria and director of "Jakin" magazine

Iñaki Uribe: Counsellor-representative of the Administrative Council

Xabier Oleaga: Communication manager of Ikastolen Elkartea-Partaide (Basque Education System), former deputy editor of Egunkaria and former editor of the closed "Egin" newspaper (it was closed five years ago by the Spanish authorities).

Txema Auzmendi: Deputy director of Herri Irratia (Popular Radio) and Egunkaria-Sortzen group's member (the Basque culture promoters which created Egunkaria 13 years ago).

Xabier Alegria: Member of Udalbiltza (a net of city halls)

Released on bail

Martxelo Otamendi: Editor of Egunkaria. 30.000 euros.

Fermin Lazkano: Management director of Plazagunea and former manager of Egunkaria. 18.000 euros.

Inma Gomila: First manager of Egunkaria. 18.000 euros.

Luis Goia: Film producer and Egunkaria-Sortzen group's member. 12.000 euros.

Waiting to declare

Pello Zubiria: Deputy editor of Argia magazine and former editor of Egunkaria. He is in hospital, because he has a very critical illness and he tried to kill himself on Saturday, on the third day. He is still incommunicado, and his wife can neither see him nor get information about his health situation. Doctors yesterday allowed the judge to interrogate him.