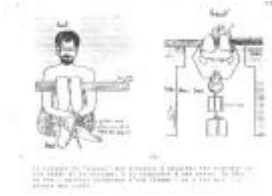


## The torture of Basque journalists "will not be investigated", says Spanish Police chief



Spanish Government's police chief Santiago Lopez Valdivieso announced on March the 31st that there will be no official investigation into the case of Basque journalists tortured in late February by Spanish paramilitary Police, the Civil Guard. Valdivieso declared torture accusations to be "false" and aimed to "discredit" Spanish police forces.

"There is no doubt, in this case ETA has succeeded in damaging the reputation of Spanish security forces", said Valdivieso at a Spanish Congress special meeting held on Monday to discuss the case.

Ten Basque journalists, writers and intellectuals were arrested by Spanish Police forces on February the 20th, and the newspaper Egunkaria, the only newspaper published in Basque, was shut down over allegations that it had links to the pro Basque independence armed organization ETA.

Some of those arrested, Egunkaria's chief editor Martxelo Otamendi among them, declared that they had been beaten and subjected to fake executions and to suffocation sessions with plastic bags over their heads placed by the Spanish Policemen, as they were held incommunicado for five days. One of the detainees had to be taken to hospital four times, as Valdivieso conceded on Monday, after he banged his head against a wall in order to escape his torturers, by suicide.

Spanish Police chief declared that detainees were assisted everyday by a coroner in the Civil Guard's HQ in Madrid. "Can anyone believe that there is a conspiracy involving Civil Guard troops, judges, coroners and prison officials?", asked Valdivieso, before a committee of the Spanish Parliament.