

Support Group says 'Egunkaria case' should be dropped now

The members of the Pro-Egunkaria Support Group believe that "in the current political climate" the 'Egunkaria case' and other similar ones should be dropped, "because credibility is not won with sermons"

The coming weeks will be crucial to see what direction the Egunkaria case takes. The Spanish National Criminal Court will soon be examining the appeal against Judge Juan Del Olmo's indictment lodged by the seven people facing charges. The Pro-Egunkaria Support Group believes that it would be an ideal opportunity "for a move to drop this case which from a democratic standpoint should never have been brought". On November 4 last year Del Olmo charged Xabier Alegria, Txema Auzmendi, Xabier Oleaga, Martxelo Otamendi, Joan Mari Torrealdai, Iñaki Uria and Pello Zubiria with "forming an illegal association" when they founded the Egunkaria newspaper. A month later an appeal was lodged by the inditees for the case to be dropped and now it is up to the Penal Chamber of the Spanish National Criminal Court to rule on it.

The document was presented yesterday by Laura Mintegi, the writer, Jesus Uzkudun, a member of the Executive Committee of the Basque Country branch of the CCOO trade union, and Xabier Arzalluz, the former Chairman of the National Executive Committee (EBB) of the EAJ/PNV. The three represented the group of sixteen people who make up the Pro-Egunkaria Support Group. The members of the Support Group referred to the "current political climate" as the basis for their reflection: "The operation against Egunkaria was the consequence of the conditions and measures created by the Aznar government (of the PP and ousted in March 2004). As today's conditions are different, it will be up to the current government and the judiciary to implement measures accordingly."

The Support Group's statement says that "the Basque public at large will not understand why the Egunkaria case or other similar ones either should go ahead in the Spanish National Criminal Court when prospects now appear to be growing for the Basque conflict to be resolved democratically."

The Support Group believes that in recent days "profound differences" have been emerging between political and judicial activity and that the moment has arrived for these to be resolved: "Credibility is not won with sermons. If a genuine intention of starting a peace process exists, steps will have to be taken in both the political and judicial spheres."

As far as the legal proceedings are concerned, now could be the right moment to drop the case, because it is still in the early stages and "such a step could prevent even greater damage, even though great irreversible damage has already been done". So the Support Group feels that an appropriate moment to drop the case could be when the Spanish National Criminal Court examines the appeals, "before the case goes to trial and without making matters politically and legally more difficult".