

Minority language journalists lobby European Parliament on behalf of Egunkaria Bruxelles / Brussel 27/03/03, by Davyth Hicks

The governing board of Midas, the minority language daily paper organization, lobbied MEPs today and yesterday on behalf of one of its members, Egunkaria, the Basque newspaper shut down by the Spanish authorities.

Eurig Wyn (Plaid Cymru) MEP recommended that, as a member of the petitions committee, that a petition be sent by Midas immediately which will raise the question in Parliament.

Other tactics were discussed with Basque MEP Koldo Gorostiaga who backed the petition idea and that it would lead to a Parliamentary Question being tabled and further EU discussion.

Catalan MEP Concepcio Ferrer, while sympathetic, pointed out that 'while many might support Egunkaria' in the European Parliament there was 'no juridical basis to express this formally'.

Speaking to EuroLang, Egunkaria's Jose Mari Pastor chief of the paper's international section said:

'We think that the meetings we've had over the last two days in Brussels with MEPs have been very useful. We have been able to tell them what has been going on from our own point of view. People here are very concerned about this issue. They find it quite difficult to understand that a member-state of the EU can behave in such a way, in closing down newspapers and torturing journalists.

If they have something legal against the journalists first they should have to prove it, and then act, and then only against individuals. They should not be able to act against something with a collective identity such as a paper. Instead, they have just gone about it in another way: closing it down.' (EL)