

Jordi Borrás

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[Press release](#) | 07.06.2018

Altsasu case – concerns over fundamental rights and judicial independence in Spain

Statement from EFA MEPs Ana Miranda & Jordi Solé

MEPs from the EFA Group in the European Parliament have voiced concerns about the independence of the Spanish judiciary and fundamental rights in Spain.

The MEPs criticised this week's 'disproportionate' sentencing of several youths from the small Basque town of Altsasu, who were involved in a bar brawl with off-duty Guardia Civil police officers.

The original charges of terrorism were rejected by the court, but the group still received custodial sentences of between two and thirteen years.

Similar concerns were raised by the jailing of peaceful, democratic Catalan pro-independence leaders on charges of sedition and rebellion.

EFA MEP **Ana Miranda** (BNG) said:

"What we've seen in Altsasu is the use of judicial tools as a means of intimidation.

"This clearly disproportionate sentencing will only fuel people's distrust in the Spanish state's judicial system.

"The right to a fair trial and equal treatment before the law should be apply equally to all, but it seems this is not the case in the Spanish state.

"Spain's judicial system has clearly not yet completed the transition to that of a modern, independent European democracy which respects fundamental rights and personal freedoms."

EFA MEP **Jordi Solé**, (ERC) said:

"Handing out sentences of up to thirteen years for a group of young people who did nothing more than get into a fight in a bar, and some of them having already been in pre-trial detention for over 500 days, is clearly disproportionate and has nothing to do with justice.

"In the same regard, the imprisonment of Catalan politicians and civil society leaders, for nothing more than organizing or supporting a referendum and thus carrying out a democratic mandate, is outrageous.

"In such circumstances, it is little wonder that we Catalans seek independence from a state that is showing a growing disregard for basic fundamental rights and freedoms and where the perception of independence of the judiciary is one of the lowest across the EU."

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Ana Miranda

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