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Reaction to ECHR ruling on Basque prisoner

EFA Press release from Iñaki Irazabalbeitia and others

EFA MEPs **Iñaki Irazabalbeitia**, **François Alfonsi** and **Tatjana Zdanoka**, held a press conference in Strasbourg to give their reaction to yesterday's verdict at the European Court of Human Rights condemning Spain's treatment of a Basque prisoner.

The Court found that Spain had contravened the Convention by arbitrarily extending the sentence of a Basque prisoner beyond the thirty year maximum that can be imposed in Spain.

The three MEPs are long standing supporters of the Basque peace process, and have called for EU support to help build a lasting and sustainable peace.

Iñaki Irazabalbeitia MEP (Basque Country) said:

"I welcome the immediate release of Inés del Río - it's a very positive signal which can help the Basque peace process move forward. The ECHR found that Spain's so-called 'Parot doctrine' whereby remission is granted against the total sentence rather than Spain's 30-year limit, breaches article 7 of the Convention.

"This verdict may deal with only one case, but it will have implications in many others. I hope that the Spanish government will respect the verdict of the court and not try to impede the implementation of its decision.

"This is an important step forward in the recognition of prisoners' rights. I hope that the understandable expressions of joy by the prisoners and the supporters of those to be released will be respectful of the pain suffered by the victims.

"Finally, I call once more upon the EU authorities to offer their support to the peace process in the Basque Country just as they did in Ireland."

François Alfonsi MEP (Corsica) said:

"In the case of Northern Ireland, it came to a point where the UK government was ready to sit down and talk and compromise in order to build a lasting peace. Up to now, the Spanish government has refused to hold talks or compromise but this ECHR verdict may well be the impetus for new progress towards building a

lasting peace."

Tatjana Zdanoka MEP (Latvia) commented:

"We visited Spain in July and asked to visit a political prisoner to assess the situation for ourselves. Shockingly, our request was refused by the Spanish Justice Ministry. Now, following this ECHR ruling, Spain will have to live up to its human rights obligations. I hope it will help build the foundations for a durable and peaceful resolution to the conflict."

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