

CAMPACC, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, Statewatch, Basque Solidarity Campaign

**The Basque Country and Northern Ireland:
Self-Determination, Proscription and Human Rights in the EU**

Seminar 1

The Right to Self Determination and Conflict Resolution in the EU

Thursday 25 June, 6.30-8.30pm

Room SGO1, College of Law, 14 Store Street WC1 (Goodge St. station)

Bill Bowring (Professor of Law, Birkbeck College)

Urko Aiartza (Attorney and a member of Eskubideak, the Basque Lawyers Association)

Séanna Walsh (Head of Cultural Department, Sinn Fein)

Seminar 2

Proscription and Human Rights in the EU

Thursday 9 July, 6.30-8.30pm

Birkbeck College, Clore Building, Torrington Square, WC1 (Russell Square station)

Ben Hayes (Associate Director, Statewatch)

Julen Arzuaga (Behatokia Human Rights Observatory, Basque Country)

Alex Fitch (Peace in Kurdistan Campaign & CAMPACC)

The Basque Country (Euskal Herria) is located on both sides of the border between Spain and France. The majority of the 3 million Basques live within the Spanish state. The Basque people have waged a centuries-long struggle for self-determination from Spanish rule. On 15 February 1990, by an absolute majority of 38 votes, the Basque Parliament proclaimed the right of the Basque People to self-determination, including the lawful authority of its citizens to take decisions, freely and democratically.

Some years later, the Good Friday Agreement of 10 April 1998, overwhelmingly endorsed by the people of Ireland, North and South, in referenda, enshrined the right to self-determination of the people of Ireland alone. Recognition of this right by the UK government had been a key demand of *Sinn Fein*. The UK Government never banned or proscribed *Sinn Fein*, and the Agreement was the result of negotiations with its leaders.

This is a progressive trend, repeated throughout the EU – but not in Spain.

Batasuna, the Basque pro-independence political party, was outlawed in 2003. The most recent elections, held on 1 March 2009, were far from free or democratic. Some 20% of the Basque electorate were disenfranchised when the Supreme Court banned two more parties, *Democracy 3 Million* and *Askatasuna* (Freedom), from standing candidates. On March 23 2009, the Spanish investigating judge Baltasar Garzon, who is waging a crusade against Basque nationalism, filed “terrorism” charges against 44 pro-independence activists. The activists are alleged to be members of banned parties, including *Batasuna*, the *Communist Party of the Basque Lands* (PCTV) and *Basque Nationalist Action* (ANV). Among those charged is the Mayor of the famous town of Mondragón in Gipuzkoa province, Maria Inocencia Galparsoro.

Martin Scheinin, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, said in his Report of 16 December 2008 that he was “troubled” by Spain’s Law of Political Parties, which provides the legislative basis to ban political organisations. He said it defined “terrorism” so vaguely that it “might be interpreted to include any political party which through peaceful political means seeks similar political objectives” as those pursued by armed organisations.

These two seminars will explore the issues of self-determination, proscription and violations of human rights, especially the right to democratic elections, throughout the EU including Kurdistan, with a special comparative focus on the Northern Irish and Basque experiences.

Entrance is free! All welcome!

Further information: www.campacc.org.uk estella24@tiscali.co.uk

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