

LOUHOSSOA TRIAL

**Acquittal to definitively open
a new page in the Basque Country !**



On 2 and 3 April 2024, Béatrice Molle-Haran and Txetx Etcheverry will appear before the Paris Criminal Court, charged with «carrying, transporting and possessing weapons, munitions and explosive substances or products in connection with the terrorist organisation ETA».

The actions for which they are charged date back to 16 December 2016 and earned them the title of 'Artisans of Peace'.

On that day, along with others, including Michel Tubiana, honorary president of the Ligue des droits de l'homme (Human Rights League); Michel Berhocoirigoin, former national secretary of the Confédération Paysanne (Farmers' Confederation) and president of the Basque Country Alternative Chamber of Agriculture; Michel Bergougnan, former director of the Irouleguy wine cooperative, all three of whom are now deceased; Béatrice and Txetx took part in an operation in the Basque town of Louhossoa to neutralise around ten crates of weapons and explosives from the ETA arsenal.

ARTISANS OF PEACE

This action, for which they were arrested and placed in anti-terrorist custody, was applauded and supported by the majority of Basque society and its representatives of all political persuasions.

Indeed, these figures from civil society in the Basque Country and elsewhere, publicly known for their non-violent commitment, challenged and made up for the lack of initiatives by Paris and Madrid to constructively engage following the decision taken by ETA 5 years earlier, to end its armed struggle. The two states had continued their repression of ETA, their policies of dispersal and exception with regard to Basque prisoners, and had even made moves to prevent the ETA organisation from proceeding with an orderly and secure dismantling of its arsenal.

The action at Louhossoa was therefore aimed at initiating this dismantling, in order to put an end to 5 years of risky inertia on the part of the authorities. Hundreds of other Ar-

tisans of Peace followed suit, and on 8 April 2017, no fewer than 20,000 people gathered in Bayonne for Disarmament Day, during which the rest of ETA's arsenal was neutralised by civil society, to which the armed organisation had entrusted responsibility.

For the first time, an official working forum on the issue of Basque prisoners was set up between the French government and the Artisans of Peace, which led to the first encouraging changes in their incarceration conditions.

On 3 May 2018, ETA officially announced its dissolution.

MOVING FORWARD

In everyone's opinion, Louhossoa put an end to 5 years of dangerous immobility, accelerated the process and played an eminently positive role in opening up new prospects in the Basque Country. Much remains to be done to move towards a comprehensive and lasting peace, free from any desire for revenge, whether in the area of the recognition due to all the victims, the fate of those still imprisoned or in exile, or the duty of remembrance and truth.

This is why we, the undersigned, cannot understand why Béatrice Molle-Haran and Txetx Etcheverry have been taken before the courts, as this goes against the progress still to be made towards more peace and reconciliation in the Basque Country.

We call for them to be acquitted outright. This would send out a strong signal of a shared determination to resolve all the consequences of the armed confrontation that the Basque Country experienced for too long, and of a shared desire to open a new page in its history once and for all.



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