

Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter

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Dear Member,

We are getting close to Christmas once more, a time when we think of our family, friends and loved ones. I dearly hope everyone can have an enjoyable break, yet we cannot help but reminisce for those who we have lost.

This month, Aitor Martinez, our London advocate, has written an article on terrorism in Spain. He will be building on this in future months, showing comparisons to terrorism in Spain with the UK and the RoI. He mentions in his article the murders of Gregorio Ordoñez and Miguel Angel Blanco, both of these gentlemen have memorial patches on the new SEFF quilt that we recently unveiled at the SEFF service in Ballygawley and later at the EU HQ in Brussels.

The last year has been challenging for us all. Barry McElduff thought it was appropriate to use his crass attempt at humour to poke fun at the victims of the Kingsmills Atrocity, and by doing that, he was laughing at us all. Sinn Féin now think it is appropriate after a short period, to bring him back into politics. Martin O'Mulleoir hasn't even been sanctioned, even though he approved of McElduff's mockery. That ridicule was continued by Jude Collins, who now is claiming 'victim' status due to the BBC no longer giving him a platform for his bile.

The NIO's period of consultation that consumed us all for almost six months, was also an extremely trying time. What is now abundantly clear is the dangers contained in those proposals. Judge Keegan, in her wisdom, decided to change the supposition provided by Judge McCloskey in the Judicial Review by the Retired Police Officers' who challenged the report by the Ombudsman into the attack at Loughinisland. The NIO proposals in their present format, will encourage more of these type of reports that minimise the actions of the terrorists in the continued rewrite of history.

As Victims' Groups, we must continue to work together, unified we are stronger, providing a coherent voice that is difficult to contest by the opposition.

Yours Faithfully
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Terrorism in Spain: ETA and other terrorist groups.

This article is the first one of a series that I will write about Spanish terrorism. My goal with the series is to learn about terrorism in other countries in order to be able to compare it with the Northern Ireland Troubles. Therefore, in this first article we will get closer to the Basque situation, taking a look at the number of people who have directly been impacted by ETA and other forms of terrorism in Spain.

Spain is one of the countries in Europe, together with the UK, that has suffered more deeply the consequences of terrorist violence. Since the late 60s until today, there have been more than 1,200 people murdered, plus all those who have been injured, threatened, extorted and kidnapped. According to the Spanish author, Santamaria (2018)¹, 864 people were murdered by the terrorist group ETA between 1969 and 2009. Jihadist terrorism has killed 227 (mainly in the Madrid train bombings, March 11th, 2004). Other terrorist groups like, the communist GRAPO movement murdered 80 people, extreme right-wing terrorists murdered 35, and GAL (linked to the Spanish government) murdered 27 people, and another 14 were murdered by other terrorist groups like FRAP or Terra Lliure.

ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna -Basque Country and Freedom) was a terrorist group that, generally speaking, used violence as a means to obtain a joint and independent Basque Country (from Spain and France). ETA has proven to be the most lethal criminal group in Spanish history. From 1968 until the death of the dictator Franco (Nov. 1975) ETA and its different subgroups, murdered 43 people, from 1975 to 1983 they murdered 375, and from 1984 to 2010 killed 446 people. ETA made public their cease fire in 2011, but it was not until May 2018 when they announced “the end of their criminal career”.

ETA has not been the only criminal group to cause chaos in Spanish history and as a consequence of ETA's terrorist activity, the extreme right-wing and para-police terrorism originated. They committed their first terrorist attack in 1975 (right before the death of Franco). These groups (like GAL) killed 62 people between 1975 and 1989. According to Lopez Romo (2015), this type of violence was perpetrated by mercenaries, funded by reserved funds from the Spanish Government, and a number of police and soldiers who were seeking revenge outside the law. Gonzalez Saenz (2012) stated that “these forms of terrorism (...) resulted in less organised and lacked effective strategy (...)” when compared with ETA's terrorism which was much more lethal.

On the other hand, extremist left-winged or communist terrorist groups murdered 80 people, especially in the years after the dictatorship was over. Only in 1979 they killed 31 people (1975-2006). According to Avilés Farré (2010), some extremist left-wing terrorist groups like GRAPO “were revolutionary groups with a strong internal cohesion and very closed to outsiders (...) showed characteristics of a cult”².

The numbers of the people murdered by ETA help us to understand how lethal the terrorist group was. But behind those numbers there are faces, stories, emotions etc. So, who were the victims of ETA?

More than half of ETA victims were members of the security forces (army and police) 56%. Out of the 486 members of the security forces murdered, 203 were part of the Guardia Civil (National police duties but organised as a military force), 146 belonged to the National Police Corps (National civilian police force), 98 people were soldiers of the National Army, 24 were part of the Local Police (from different localities), 13 were part of the Ertzaintza (Basque Police Service) and the remaining 4 people killed were members of the Miñones, Mozos de Escuadra and French Gendarmerie.

The other 44% of the people killed by ETA were civilians. ETA had perpetrated different type of terror attacks, some have been against civilians in public places, like the attack perpetrated in a popular supermarket in Barcelona, in 1987, where as a result of the blast 25 people were killed and 40 injured. ETA also used to place bombs under the car of politicians or businessmen, like in the case of Fernando Buesa and his bodyguard (2000). Or shoot them like in the case of Gregorio Ordoñez (1995). ETA carried out 38 kidnappings; in one of them they kidnapped the politician Miguel Angel Blanco and shot him dead after two days imprisonment.

1. Information obtained from the Journal of Victimology, “La contribución del movimiento asociativo y fundacional a la visibilidad de las víctimas del terrorismo en España” by Eduardo Mateo Santamaria. 2018.

2. For more information about other forms of terrorism in Spain please visit the article mentioned above