



Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

Mediation for peace

Statement
David Harland
Official disbandment of ETA
3rd May 2018

Thank you very much for coming.

I would like to say a few words about ETA.

There have been several media stories and speculation that ETA intends to dissolve itself. But there has been no official confirmation or communication from ETA itself.

Until now.

I can state that as of 1400 hours today, the 3rd of May, ETA has ceased to exist. This information has today been officially conveyed to the governments of France and Spain.

HD has received ETA's official final declaration that it has disbanded forever, accompanied by a letter to HD from ETA, explaining its decision. HD is certain the declaration and letter from ETA are official and authentic.

In its letter to HD, ETA states:

“ETA has decided to end its 60 years of existence. This decision has been taken by the entire membership of the organization that has overwhelmingly supported this step proposed by the leadership. Nearly 3000 militants participated in one way or another in this process, although only half of them had the right to vote as members of ETA. In the end, 93 per cent of those participating supported the decision. As such, in a definitive step, ETA ceases to be a political actor, this following the end of its armed activity in 2011 and its disarming in 2017. There should be no doubt whatsoever of the will of ETA to leave behind a cycle of armed confrontation and to promote a new political period in our country.”

I would now like to convey to you the main points of ETA's official declaration of dissolution, in ETA's own words, that was sent to HD in four languages – Basque, French, Spanish and English. It is the last declaration ETA will ever make.

“ETA, the Basque socialist revolutionary organization for national liberation, hereby informs the Basque people that, following the ratification by its members of the proposal to conclude this Organization's historical cycle and function, its journey has ended.

As a consequence of this decision:

-ETA has completely dismantled all of its structures.

-ETA has put an end to all its political activity. It will no longer express political positions, promote initiatives or interact with other actors.

-Former members of ETA will continue the struggle for a reunited, independent, socialist Basque-speaking and non-patriarchal Basque Country, wherever they see fit, with the sense of responsibility and honesty they have always demonstrated.

ETA's final declaration also states that from now on the challenge will be "to build agreements among those with differing viewpoints, in order to overcome the consequences of the conflict and to address its root causes. A key part of this will be to bring into effect the right to decide, in order to achieve recognition of our nationhood."

ETA ends its declaration:

"We have made this, our last decision, in order to foster a new historical phase. ETA was born from the people and it now dissolves back into the people."

ETA's final declaration is signed and stamped by ETA, and dated: "In the Basque Country, 3 May 2018."

Before concluding, I would like to share a couple of brief observations.

First, I hope and believe this is the end of a confrontation in which ETA killed more than 850 people and wounded thousands of others, a bitter confrontation that also saw torture of some of those detained for supporting ETA, and the killing of several suspected ETA members by mercenaries directed by some members of the state. All this was deeply wounding and polarizing. It is almost certain the majority of citizens felt the violence was unacceptable and unjustified.

Second, it has been a long road to get here, more than 15 years of effort to end armed violence and bring peace.

In 2004, the Spanish government and ETA initiated talks, facilitated by HD, that broke down in 2007. Work then began to renew steps towards peace. In 2011 ETA announced its decision to end armed attacks. In 2017 it handed over 3.5 tonnes of weapons. A few weeks ago ETA made a statement recognizing the suffering it had caused. The last outstanding demand of the governments of France and Spain was that ETA should disband. That has now happened today.

Third, I would like to thank all those – governments and organizations and individuals – who devoted themselves to this good result today. Firm government, and resolute, effective and continuous police pressure played an essential role in convincing ETA to end violence and disband. There were also many bridge-builders of great courage. I will name four today.

Jesus Eguiguren, former Basque Socialist Party president, who was one of the first and most effective advocates of peace, and who paid a heavy price, with the murder by ETA

of many of those closest to him. Spanish President Jose Luis Zapatero who initiated peace efforts in 2004. President of the Basque Country, Inigo Urkullu, who has promoted peace, truth about torture and steps on prisoners. And Basque independence political leader Arnaldo Otegi, Who led the move to complete non-violence and strongly advocated for an end to ETA's violence and for its dissolution.

Fourth, a long work of reconciliation now lies ahead. It will require recognition, respect, apology and support to all victims of violence, as well as a commitment to truth and justice, wherever that leads.

Fifth, this is also the end of a long – difficult and silent -- journey for HD, and I would like to thank all those who played a part in that.

Last, I would like to conclude with a minute of silence to remember the victims of violence.

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Thank you very much. May it never happen again.