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The group of Spanish lawyers from the 11/3 bombing trial

The group of Spanish lawyers from the 11/3 trial is a group of lawyers who worked on the trial following the 11 March 2004 Madrid train bombings. The terrorist acts of 11 March 2004 were among the largest terrorist acts ever committed in Europe. They took the life of 191 persons. A further 1.800 people were injured. These attacks brutally harmed international, European and Spanish society and are regrettably a part of our common history.

The trial of the 11/3 was conducted in the Audiencia Nacional during the year 2007 and constituted an exceptional and unique macro-trial with a length of 18 months and held only three years after the events. Once the suspects were captured a few days after the event, they were put into custody pending trial, waiting for Legal Aid lawyers to be appointed to defend them. The task was not easy due to the fact that most of them did not speak Spanish nor were they interested in the charges brought against them. The Madrid Bar appointed through its Legal aid scheme 23 lawyers for the defence and 3 for the prosecution.

The lawyers involved in the trial of the 11/3 had to overcome immense obstacles to exercise their task to the extent that their own professional careers and private lives were affected.

It is also difficult to imagine the social context and the pressure of the media that all the parties (judges, prosecutors, victims, accused and lawyers) stood throughout the process. The pressure was exponential for those lawyers in charge of representing the suspects. It had to be added to the very tight deadlines, to the insignificant remuneration (only a small surplus from a normal criminal case), and to the costs of standing such a burden in their personal and professional life, which included in some cases the closing of some of the law firms for over one year losing income and clients.

Negotiations were undertaken with the support of their Bar and the General Council to guarantee better conditions for the exercise of the Right of Defence. The difficulties are well pictured by the initial dissent to access to the summary documents justified on the secrecy and the number of files. It was often impossible to communicate with clients and, as a matter of fact, impossible to have solid arguments to defend them in a process in which basic and fundamental rights at stake should be protected.

The motivation behind these legal aid lawyers is exactly the impulse behind the CCBE itself. It is the defence of principles that constitute the basis of a democracy founded on the Rule of Law: the primacy of Legality, Equity and Equality in any legal proceeding, for both claimants and defendants. These lawyers are the best evidence that legal representation, including the right to legal aid, is a cornerstone to preserve the right to a fair trial in all circumstances.

It is felt that the work of these lawyers to guarantee the most basic rights, the "Right to have Rights", deserves the CCBE award of this year. They believe that they were only performing their profession.

The names of the lawyers are the following:

Antonio Alberca Pérez, Jesús Maria Andújar Urrutia, Francisco José Andújar Ramírez, Eva Aragón Fernández-Cavada, Andres Arévalo Pérez-Fontán, Beatriz Margarita Bernal Gaipo, José Luis Borraz Diaz, Fernando Crespo Vadillo, Miguel Garcia Pajuelo, Eduardo Ezequiel Garcia Peña, María Isabel García Moreno, Juan Ramón Gemeno Marín, Cristóbal Gil del Campo, Juan Carlos Herranz Blázquez, José Luis d'íom Laso, Ricardo López Sanchez, Mónica Teresa Peña Maesso, María del Carmen Perez Calera, Maria del Mar Ramos Llorens, Julio Sanchez-Majano Suarez-Llanos, Juan Jesús Yebes Ballesteros, Endika Zulueta San Sebastian, Alicia Moreno Pérez.

Mr Endika Zulueta San Sebastian will be handed the award for the group of lawyers. 13 of them will be present in Brussels for the award.