

# Terrorism in Spain



## EDUCATIONAL PROJECT "MEMORY AND PREVENTION OF TERRORISM". UNIT OF WORK NO. 1

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This material is presented as a summary of the Unit of Work that the Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs and the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the Spanish National Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, and the Spanish Victims of Terrorism Foundation have developed to facilitate the work of teachers when explaining issues related to terrorism which are included in Geography and History curriculum for 14-15-year-old secondary school students.

This summary is intended for schools that participate in the pilot Programme of engaging with the direct testimony of victims of terrorism in the classroom. Such engagement includes listening to the firsthand experience of victims of terrorism, trying to relate to their personal experience, and then discussing the experience of the victims with other participants in the activity.

Prior to carrying out the activity, it is advisable that students know the main aspects related to the history of terrorism in Spain. This material is offered for such a purpose.

## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has marked Spain since the 1960s. In this introduction, we analyze the development of terrorism in Spain, before delving into its evolution during three significant phases:

THE FRANCO DICTATORSHIP

THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

THE DEMOCRATIC PERIOD

Terrorism affects different areas:

**Politics:** Terrorism violates democratic principles, generating a particular fear that reduces the possibilities of free and equal political participation.

**Economy:** Terrorist attacks cause material and security costs.

**Society:** Terrorism challenges coexistence by attacking the most fundamental human rights.

Above all, terrorism affects **its victims**, those who emerge as the most tragic consequence of the use of violence: the murdered, wounded, kidnapped, extorted, and threatened, as well as the ones closest to them (family and friends).

## WHAT IS TERRORISM?

There are different definitions of terrorism. A consensus has not been reached among specialists on what terrorism is. However, they agree that different forms of terrorism share the following elements:

### CLANDESTINE VIOLENCE

Terrorism is committed in a secret way to avoid the action of justice. This clandestine nature of terrorism in turn causes greater isolation and radicalization within the terrorist group.

### IMPOSE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Behind terrorism is the issue of power, normally directed towards an institution or organization which the terrorists aim to make submit to their demands by the use of force.

### CREATING A CLIMATE OF TERROR

The etymology of the word indicates that terrorism comes from terror, which is precisely what terrorists intend to provoke: an intense fear among people.

### PROPAGANDIST IMPACT

Terrorist groups take advantage of the impact caused by their attacks to spread their distorted message.

*One of the convoys at the Atocha train station in Madrid after the explosions on the morning of 11th March 2004. Source: Sergio Barrenechea/Agencia Efe.*



Terrorism has affected the countries around us in different ways. The following terrorist organizations which are driven by different ideologies have committed acts of terrorism in Spain:

### RADICAL NATIONALISTS

The terrorist gang that was active for the longest period was ETA, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Country and Freedom terrorist organization). The different branches of this group were responsible for the death of more than 800 people between 1968 and 2010 during a violent campaign whose main objective was the independence of the Basque Country. In addition, in Catalonia, members of EPOCA (Catalan People's Army) were responsible for three fatalities and Terra Lliure (Catalonian nationalist paramilitary group) for one. In Galicia, those of the *Guerrilheiro do Povo Galego Ceive* Army (Guerrilla Army of the Free Galician People in Galician language) were responsible for two deaths. And, in the Canary Islands, MPAIAC (Movement for the Independence and self-determination of the Canaries Archipelago), who wanted to emulate ETA, killed one.

### ULTRA RIGHT

Terrorism of the Ultra Right was fragmented into different organizations: BVE (Spanish Basque Battalion), Triple A (Anti-Communist Apostolic Alliance) or GAE (Spanish Armed Groups). Its main goals were to return to a dictatorship like that of the Franco regime and to respond to ETA with a terrorist campaign from the opposite side. About 60 murders have been attributed to them between 1975 and 1982.

### EXTREME LEFT

The main group from this category were GRAPO - First October Revolutionary Anti-Fascist Resistance Group. Founded in 1975, they remained in operation until the 2010s. They wanted to establish a socialist republic in Spain by force. They were responsible for around 80 murders.

### JIHADIST

The objective of this group of terrorists is to establish a caliphate under an orthodox interpretation of the sharia, the Islamic law. In Spain, the first attack of this type took place in 1985 at the *El Descanso* restaurant. Subsequently, jihadist cells linked to *Al Qaeda* caused the largest terrorist massacre in our history: the 11th March 2004 attacks in Madrid, which caused 193 fatalities and hundreds of injuries. More recent attacks include those of Barcelona and Cambrils which were committed on 17th August 2017 with a total of 16 people dead and more than a hundred injured. These terrorist actions show that the jihadist threat is still present in Spain, as it is in many other countries.

## THE FRANCO DICTATORSHIP

The Franco regime lasted between 1939 and 1975, from the end of the Spanish Civil War until the death of the dictator Francisco Franco.

Different terrorist organizations arose during the Franco dictatorship. The first victim of terrorism in Spain was Begoña Urroz in 1960. She was killed in a San Sebastián (Basque Country) train station following the explosion of a bomb that had been planted by DRIL, the Iberian Revolutionary Liberation Directorate.

In addition, before Franco's death, GRAPO, from the ultra-left, and ETA, born out of radical Basque nationalist ideology, were founded. ETA emerged in 1958 after breaking with the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party). The first fatality connected to ETA was the civil guard José Pardines Arcay in 1968.

Contrary to what has sometimes been argued, the emergence of terrorism was not an inevitable consequence of the existence of a dictatorship in Spain. Terrorism also emerged during this period in other democratic countries that surrounded Spain.

ETA, however, wanted to start a spiral of violence, consisting of, first, committing attacks; second, provoking an aggressive response from the dictatorship; and third, generating a wave of sympathy for its cause among the Basque and Navarrese populations. Few foresaw that terrorism would continue after the dictatorship with even greater intensity than before.



*Begoña Urroz Ibarrola and her parents, Juan and Jesusa, in a photograph of her baptism. Source: El País newspaper.*



*The coffins of the lawyers murdered in the Atocha massacre. Five people, linked to an office of the "Comisiones Obreras" (Workers' Commissions Trade Union), were assassinated by far-right terrorists (Madrid, January 1977). The fatalities were Enrique Valdelvira, Luis Javier Benavides, Francisco Javier Sauquillo, Serafin Holgado and Ángel Rodríguez. Source: Agencia Efe.*

## THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

In November 1975, the death of Franco opened a period of uncertainty and hope in Spain. This began a process of dismantling the institutions of the Franco regime and the gradual reintroductions of certain freedoms. Due to successive pardons and amnesties, all political prisoners had been released from jail by the end of 1977, including those belonging to terrorist organizations such as ETA or GRAPO. Likewise, crimes committed in the name of the Franco regime were also amnestied.

The Spanish Constitution, the basis of the new system of rights and freedoms, was approved by Spanish citizens in a referendum in December 1978.

However, a minority wanted to destabilize this process of building democracy. On the one hand, those nostalgic for the Franco regime tried to return to the dictatorship and attacked the new rights of

the people, such as freedom of expression. For example, in 1977, Triple A (Anti-Communist Apostolic Alliance) sent a bomb to the editorial staff of the satirical magazine *El Pápus*, assassinating the caretaker Joan Peñalver. Meanwhile, GRAPO tried to force their particular revolution by armed means with their assassination of numerous policemen, civil guards, and businessmen.

However, the main terrorist threat against the nascent democracy was ETA, the deadliest terrorist group and, notably, the group with the most support by being centered around the HB electoral coalition, *Herri Batasuna* (Popular Unity, a far-left nationalist coalition). ETA and other related organizations killed 11 people in 1977, 66 in 1978, 80 in 1979 and 96 in 1980, the year with the most terrorist murders in Spain during the transition.

## DEMOCRACY

At the beginning of the 1980s, democracy was consolidated in Spain. With it, a path of European integration and economic, social and cultural modernization began. But it continued to face different terrorist threats.



Firefighters try to access the interior of the Hipercor shopping centre carpark after an ETA attack (Barcelona, 19/06/1987). Source: Agencia Efe.

Throughout the 1980s, ETA killed numerous victims. For example, it was responsible for the attacks against the headquarters of the Civil Guard in Zaragoza, with a total of 11 murdered (including five children). Furthermore, ETA committed attacks against the *Hipercor* supermarket in Barcelona, which resulted in 21 fatalities (four were children).

During this period a type of para-police terrorism also made its appearance, framed under the acronym GAL, Antiterrorist Liberation Groups. Some public officials, police and civil guards were involved in this illegal plot. Their purpose was to fight ETA using the same methods. Between 1983 and 1987, GAL committed 27 murders. Its case reminds us that the fight against terrorism must take place within the rule of law, so that the measures that we take do not sink to the level of the terrorism.

The Security Forces acting in accordance with the law detained numerous members of ETA, including successive leaders. The group was severely weakened in the 1990s and in the 2000s. ETA ceased its terrorist activities in 2011.

But the 21st century opened with another threat: jihadism. Such groups had already committed acts of terrorism previously in Spain, for example with the use of a bomb in the restaurant *El Descanso* in Madrid, where 18 people died.



In memory of the victims of 11-M at the Atocha train station, organized by the Spanish Victims of Terrorism Foundation together with other groups, associations, and foundations of victims of terrorism. Madrid, 18/03/2004. Source: Ballesteros / Agencia Efe.

Jihadism returned in the 21st century with the attacks of 11th September 2001 on the Twin Towers in New York, perpetrated by Al Qaeda, and the attacks of 11th March 2004 on four trains in Madrid, the largest terrorist massacre ever in Spain, carried out by terrorist cells linked to Al Qaeda.

Islamist terrorism is still active today in different countries. Spain suffered attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, committed on 17th August 2017.

As for the social response to terrorism, a pacifist movement emerged in the mid-1980s. Entities such as Gesture for Peace (Gesto por la Paz) or Denon Artean-Peace and Reconciliation ((Denon Artean-Paz y Reconciliación) called for silent rallies every time there was another assassination. Hundreds of citizens, including victims of terrorism, participated in these public events. The pioneering AVT, the Spanish Association of Victims of Terrorism, was born in 1981. Later, other groups and foundations would be created, until reaching the number of thirty groups that exist today. Their work focuses on a series of demands: justice, truth, dignity, and memory.

In the 1990s, Gesto por la Paz devised a campaign to demand the freedom of those kidnapped by terrorist organizations. It consisted of pinning a blue ribbon to your clothes. Between 1996 and 1997, José Antonio Ortega Lara spent 532 days in the hands of ETA, locked in a tiny humid den. Throughout its history ETA has kidnapped more than 80 people, but this was the longest kidnapping that had taken place in Spain.

The main demonstrations against terrorism in Spain took place around the kidnapping and murder in 1997 of the young Ermua councilor Miguel Ángel Blanco at the hands of ETA, and again after the 11-M attacks. On those occasions, millions of people took to the streets in cities and towns throughout Spain. One way in which citizens expressed their rejection of terrorist violence was by raising their white-stained hands. The protesters wanted to express that, unlike terrorists, their hands were not stained with blood. After the attacks of jihadist terrorism on 11th March 2004, the black ribbon was the expression of rejection of such attacks and of solidarity with the victims.

Terrorism has also led to the existence of another type of victim: the threatened. ETA is the group that has caused the greatest number of threats. People who lived with the anguish of suffering an attack had to abandon their homes to get to a safe place in another part of Spain. Some were threatened by the fact of belonging to certain collectives that were in the sights of ETA (members of the Police Armed Forces, public officials of constitutional parties, journalists, teachers, businessmen, judges, intellectuals critical of terrorism, amongst others). Other people threatened included those who refused to pay extortion to ETA or found themselves being accused by the terrorists of anything that made them worthy of an attack, such as being accused as enemies of the Basque people. The terrorist threat, what was called "persecution violence," forced thousands of people to live with police protection for many years and forced others to leave their homes, cities, friendships, hobbies, and work to go into exile.



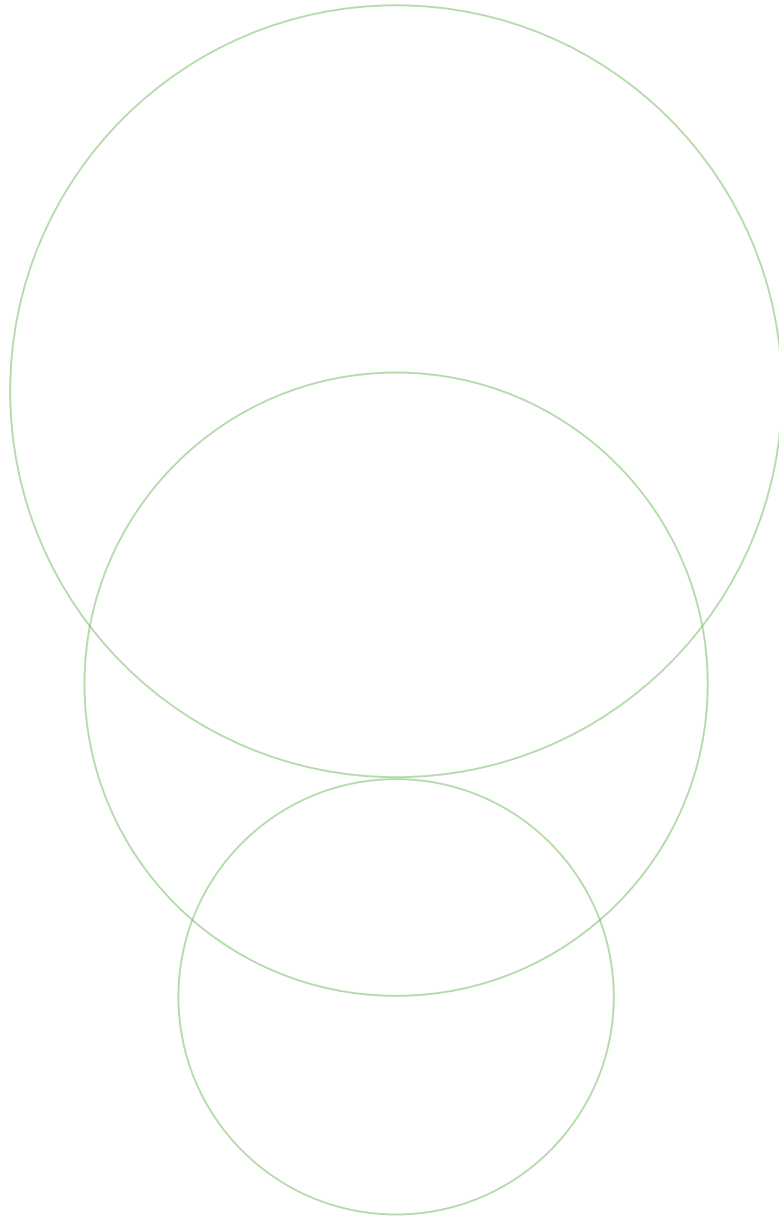
*Dozens of people show their white hands during the demonstration that was convened in Madrid the day after the attacks of 11th March 2004 under the slogan "With the victims, with the Constitution, for the defeat of terrorism".*

*Source: Juanjo Martín / Agencia Efe.*



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Every 27<sup>th</sup> June, on the anniversary of the death of Begoña Urroz, the "Day of the Victims of Terrorism" is celebrated in Spain. What other ways can you think of to commemorate the victims of terrorism? Do you know any place of memory dedicated to the victims of terrorism in your town or city? If the answer is yes, we suggest you visit that place, take a photo, or look for information online. Describe it. Ask what it represents, what symbols it has, when it was created, who designed it, from whom the initiative came, how was the inauguration? What feelings and emotions did this create for you?



GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF SPAIN  
**14-15-YEAR-OLD SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**