

Strasbourg, 11 March 2004

Statement by Pat COX on the terrorist attacks in Spain

This morning in Madrid, at the height of rush-hour earlier today, there have been at least five bomb blasts at three railway stations. The worst of these was on a train entering the Atocha station in Madrid.

Tens of people have been murdered; scores of people are injured. With each report, the reported casualty list is rising. This is, in terms of consequence, the worst act of terror in the history of Spain, the worst act of terror in memory in any European Union state. It is an outrageous, unjustified, and unjustifiable attack on the Spanish people and on Spanish democracy.

On behalf of this Parliament, I express our heartfelt, deep, sincere sympathy and condolences to the families who have suffered loss and injury, to their friends, and, through His Majesty the King of Spain, to the people of Spain and to the authorities of the city of Madrid, who even as I speak have field hospitals in the railway station and in the streets.

There is a general election due in Spain on Sunday. What happened today is a declaration of war on democracy. Let Sunday give the answer that Spanish democracy is strong. Let Sunday give the answer that Spanish democracy is determined to overcome terrorism by all of the available means to that process. In Madrid last January I addressed the first ever conference organised internationally for the victims of terror. I said then, and I repeat it here today, that in our political duty to the people of Spain and to the peoples of the European Union, it is our firm resolve that there shall be no safe haven for terrorism and terrorists in our European Union.

On behalf of the European Parliament I would like to express our firm commitment in favour of democracy and human rights. No more bombs. No more deaths. Together we will end terrorism. I ask the House, as a mark of respect, to fly the Spanish flag and the European flag at half-mast. I invite you please now, in your own way to show your solidarity and to observe a minute's silence.