

## Demonstration Held in Vera, Spain over illegal builds

Over 1000 protesters attend Vera Demonstration

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A cold grey morning didn't stop over 1000 people turning out to Vera's Plaza Mayor to support the Prior family who, amid much publicity, had their villa in La Loma, Vera, demolished in early January. Around 70% of the attendees were Spanish, of all ages, braving the chill with the English supporters, to wait an hour for the demonstration to start - it had been delayed as protesters had to wait for mass in the church to finish.

The meeting was opened by Lenox Napier (Ciudadanos Europeos), who gave an outline of what would be covered by the two guest Speakers, Angel Medina the vice mayor of Mojacar and Paco Vasquez a Vera town planning councillor. He also said that Helen Prior would briefly make a speech at the end of the presentation, to thank all those attending for their support. He asked for all of present to give a round of applause at that point for the Priors, to show our support for them, and a warm round of applause followed.

Lenox kept both the Spanish and English contingent happy and up to date by speaking a few sentences in Spanish and then translating into English. This was appreciated by everyone as there was no long wait to hear what was being said.

Angel Medina spoke quite briefly, but to the point, quoting the old Roman Law, existing here for two thousand years, which states that everyone has a right to a home. He added that no house should be demolished due to a political wrangle.

The second speaker, Mr Vasquez, began by explaining that Spanish law prevented the mayor of Vera from attending



the rally. He then went on to say that it was a disgrace that the Junta had chosen to demolish a house that was fully legal, with all paperwork available for inspection in the Town Hall if anyone wanted to look at it. He said that Almeria was 85% protected land, and that it has been thoughtfully developed, with no skyscrapers etc, and he couldn't understand why they were making an example of Almeria with the demolition in Vera. Importantly, he said that the Junta de Andalucia were now backtracking and have said that there will be no more demolitions in Andalusia until the PGOU's (General Plans for Urban Develop-

ment) have been submitted by the Town Councils. Vasquez stated that the Junta had said that the Priors home was demolished because they thought that it was the beginning of a village or urbanisation in the rural area. He also stated that the Junta was trying to remove the power from the Town Councils, who should have the ultimate decision regarding planning for their area.

All the speeches were warmly received by the 1000 plus crowd, and the impression overall was one of genuine sympathy for the Priors and the ongoing situation.

The event was covered by both the Spanish and British media, including Spain's TVE, GMTV from the UK and various daily papers from the UK.



Lastly, Helen Prior came to the stand and thanked everyone sincerely for their support. She spoke of how she wanted to thank one lady from the Junta especially, who made such determined efforts to make sure that their home was demolished, making two pensioners homeless, and hoped the said lady could sleep at night. She also invited Mr Zapatero (the president of Spain) to meet with her and look her in the eye and say that demolishing their home was justified. She thanked everyone once again, and at that point broke down in tears.

The rally dispersed slowly, many stopping to chat and hug Helen Prior and her husband.

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