

British Citizens meet the United Left- Green Party

Aulan Press Release, 12th July 2009

Following on from the recent successful round table meeting held in Mojucar, between ecologists and numerous citizens associations from Almeria, other parts of Andalucia and beyond, a meeting was held on the 10th July 2009, in Turre, attended by over 100 persons, including members of the citizens associations, AULAN, AUAN, Levante sin Cables, AVEP, Cantoria Residents Association, as well as other members of the public.

The initiative for the meeting came from Izquierda Unida – Los Verdes, and presiding the meeting was Enrique Ruiz Guerrero, the lawyer of that political party. At the meeting was Jose Antonio Castro, an Andalucian Parliament MP, and member of the Planning and Environmental Law committees of the Andalucian Parliament, who came to hear the concerns of numerous citizens affected by planning and real estate abuse, many of whom are without basic services such as water and electricity.

From the United Left – Green Party, were also present Rosalia, the coordinator for the party in Almeria, Antonio Romero a member of the Diputacion of Almeria, Martin the Councillor from Turre of the same party, as well as other members of the party.

A video was shown explaining the plight of the El Fas residents in Cantoria, one of whose members it was stated had received veiled death threats, as well as of the Prior family, whose house was razed to the ground over a year ago, despite having planning permission, and who are now living in their garage.

AUAN gave a speech asking for building licences to be frozen in the Almanzora Valley (where there are thousands of allegedly illegal houses) until the cases of planning irregularities are resolved.

Mrs Prior also gave a speech. In the case of Mrs Prior it was suggested from the floor that, given that it was clear that the Prior family were innocent victims of a political fight between the Town Hall of Vera and the Junta de Andalucia, and given that each of these arms of the Spanish administration accepted that the family should be compensated, but that the compensation be paid by the other branch, the matter should be submitted to independent arbitration as to who should pay – so as to avoid lengthy and expensive court proceedings, which could take years.

A member of the residents of El Fas, AVEP in Bedar, as well as a resident in El Gor in Huerca- Overa, and Juan Grima on behalf of Levante sin Cables also explained their problems. Lenox Napier, well known for his defence of citizens rights in the area, also gave a general explanation of the plight of many people who had thought they had bought a dream in Spain, where they wished to spend the last years of their lives, only to find that the dream had turned into a nightmare.

The Decalogue presented at the recent round table was given to the participants of the United Left – Green Party.

The meeting was ended by a speech by Jose Antonio Castro who made various commitments including:

- (1) They would raise a non-legislative motion in the Andalucian Parliament on the basis of the first three points of the Decalogue;
- (2) They would raise parliamentary questions on a general level asking how the Junta proposed to deal with these sort of planning problems;
- (3) They would assist with a meeting with the Public Ombudsman's office for Andalucia where the citizens groups could explain their problems and could ask the Ombudsman to investigate these.

They made it clear that they totally accepted the Auken report. As to the first three points of the Decalogue which were accepted, these are:

COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION: A national commission of investigation be established, with representatives of the administration and citizens' groups (including those for the protection of homeowners' rights and the ecologists), to investigate the existing grave planning and environmental problems, to draw up a report on the causes of said problems and their possible solutions, as well as recommendations for the future.

ARBITRATION: The creation of a special administrative commission that includes a provincial public ombudsman, advised by independent investigation services, including representatives from the administration and from citizens' groups (including those for the defence of individual property owners and ecology groups), and with arbitration powers in relation to disputes concerning these problems, available to affected parties free of charge.

RESPONSIBILITY: The liability of developers, the administration and pertinent third parties, for having given rise to the grave planning and environmental problems which exist, must be made enforceable and real. Any process of regularisation should, as far as possible, include binding agreements (including adequate guarantees) between those who have caused the irregularities and the administration, and these must include the opportune measures so that those who caused the irregularities compensate for the damage caused.

It was also agreed to keep open a line of continuing dialogue.

The participants of the citizens groups expressed their thanks for this initiative, and those affected were particularly pleased that their complaints would be taken up at Andalusian Parliament level.