

SPEECH OF GERARDO MANUEL VAZQUEZ NUÑEZ (LEGAL ADVISOR TO AUAN) FOR THE DEMONSTRATION SATURDAY 8.11.2013

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Gerardo Vazquez and I am here on behalf of the association of victims of planning irregularities known as AUAN. Firstly, I would like to thank the organisers of this demonstration which brings us together today. And I can before me that we have, victims, business people, professionals, politicians of all colours, and citizens.

Why am I here? I have come to introduce a living example of bad urban planning, that is to say Mr and Mrs Prior, who have been living in their garage since the Authorities demolished their house 5 years ago, even though it had planning permission and they had acted in good faith.

This couple have not received any compensation for the revocation of their building licence, nor for the demolition of their home. Consequently, they are doomed to a long walk through the desert of the Spanish courts, in order to receive the compensation they are entitled to.

Ladies and gentlemen this is not sensible. Nor is the demolition in the last few weeks of two more houses acquired in good faith sensible either. Not to mention two more homes in danger of possible demolition. All these houses are owned by British investors, and it is not sensible to treat those who have come to our home, invested in it and formed part of the community, in this way.

It is not sensible to treat foreign investors in this way if one wishes to reactivate the Spanish property market. For who is going to buy the 2 million houses in Spain, if not foreigners? Given that, young people who are forced to leave their country, as my own parents were forced to abandon their country in their day, are hardly likely to buy the empty houses.

But ladies and gentlemen, we are not only talking about the British. There are also Spanish people whose homes are threatened unfairly.

If you want to deteriorate the Valle of Almanzora, leaving empty neighbourhoods and abandoned houses, then yes, demolition is the way forward. Otherwise, if what you want is to promote employment, wealth, social and economic welfare in the Comarca, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us be sensible, let us fix the problem. Let us all work together to make those with the power, far from the daily problems on the ground, see that they must solve the problem. And do not say that it is very complicated because it is not. What is complicated is applying unrealistic and complicated solutions such as the 'Regularisation' Decree. And I say regularisation in inverted commas.

Ladies and Gentlemen let us be clear, the Decree DOES NOT WORK. What's more it makes things worse.

I do not want to take up too much of your time, because I am not the main protagonist. The main protagonists are the people who acted in good faith whose human rights are being violated.

We are asking for a rapid solution to this issue. It can be done. The Spanish constitution was created in a month. I sincerely hope that possible solutions are addressed, not only aimed at changing the fundamental planning laws of Andalucia, the LOUA, but also to prevent the demolition of any more houses that were acquired by people acting in good faith, without guaranteeing them a fair, prior compensation. If this requires a change in the State Land Laws to bring it in line with the European Convention of Human Rights then so be it.

For this reason I make a public appeal here and now in this public forum, to the Mancomunidad of town halls of the Valley of Almanzora asking them to do three things for the benefit of the community. The first is that they promote a 'proposicion de Ley' by the town halls to change the LOUA urgently. The second is that they make an appeal to the central government that they study changing state law to avoid other cases such as Mr and Mrs Prior. The third is that they immediately promote a real and not merely decorative working party which includes all groups and all political parties to propose solutions and changes. Be brave Mayors of the Valley. We are with you.

Thank you from my heart to everyone here today. I now hand you over to Mrs Prior.