

Support the protestors of the Caixa bank

by Ecologistas en Acción
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[Signature collection] Organizations request the dismissal of proceedings for reporting activities of CaixaBank

<http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article25118.html>

Statement

For the dismissal of proceedings against 8 activists of Ecologistas en Acción for condemning the activities of CaixaBank.

In December, 2011, Ecologistas en Acción, as a part of their Federal Congress, displayed three placards in the central office of CaixaBank in Barcelona, with the following messages: "La Caixa is destroying the planet", "Social and environmental justice" and "Freedom from banks". Around 300 people participated in the non-violent, direct action protest, eight of which were displaying two of the three placards. These eight people are currently faced with serving eight months in prison.

The demonstration condemned various actions, which are easily proven. Firstly, the activists were speaking out against the enormous accumulation of political and economic power in the banking sector, confirming that banks, as a fundamental part of the markets, are responsible for the majority of public policies adopted by Governments. This can be proved by examining the chain of responsibility for public debt, most of which has been contracted by banks and savings associations to save these institutions in the current real estate crisis.

The second concept of the criticism comes from evidence that CaixaBank controls part of the actions of Spanish multinational companies, who play an important role in the sectors of energy, water and infrastructure. These are companies who employ very aggressive environmental and social policies, not only in Spain but in various nations of the South: Agbar, Repsol, and Gas Natural - Fenosa o Abertis. Some cases to illustrate this point: Agbar is restricting access to potable water to important social sectors in various regions of Latin America; Repsol has petroleum camps in areas of high biodiversity; Gas Natural - Fenosa base their business on combustible fossil fuels, the principal cause of global warming; and Abertis is constructing motorways all over the world, serving to expand a damaging and predatory model of urbanization.

The third area of concern involves the position of CaixaBank, previously La Caixa, regarding urban speculation. There are hundreds of urbanizations within Spain which have been financed by La Caixa, many of which have been converted into toxic assets, leading CaixaBank to purvey more than 2,500 millions of Euros for their portfolio of real estate credit. Another clear example is their position regarding the controversial Cajasol Tower in Seville.

Finally, the demonstration also condemned the fact that, in spite of all this, CaixaBank continues to receive a generous amount of public funds for its expansion, which has allowed it to become the leading bank in Spain, with 342,618 million Euros worth of assets, more than BBVA and Santander. This explains their acquisition of Banca Cívica, which received 977 million Euros in public funds; or the recent acquisition of Banco de Valencia, incurring 5,500 millions' worth of public

debt. As well as this, the subsidiary company of CaixaBank, Criteria, avoids paying taxes by using tax havens.

It is true that Ecologistas en Acción could have chosen a different method of communicating their criticism of this institution. It would probably have been more efficient to have paid for announcements or advertisements in the media, as CaixaBank does. However, it is obvious that neither Ecologistas en Acción, nor any other social movements, has the economic capacity to do this. While the current democratic system continues to use economic capacity as a means of discrimination in social communication, demonstrations such as that of December 2011 in the central office of CaixaBank must be held to be legitimate.

With this action, Ecologistas en Acción has simply followed the examples of the thousands of people who have participated in acts of civil disobedience, and who are recognized today by society for their work towards social and environmental justice. These are people who have decided to face the injustices of the system to achieve or maintain social rights and freedoms. The discrimination in the use of the judicial system in favour of established power is not new: while people or entities related to the political and financial elite have the means to evade punishment (criminal or economic) - when they are not officially pardoned, that is - those who protest in order to condemn an unjust social order are punished in the highest degree.

Taking all these factors into account, the following organizations (signatories to this document) consider that the demonstration, for which eight of the activists have been condemned to eight months in prison, was a legitimate action for which the dismissal of proceedings is deserved.

The organizations who would like to support this statement, please sign and enter here:
<http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article25118.html>

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