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# The Guardian

**ETA or al-Qaida?** 190 killed and 1,200 injured in train bombings

## Massacre in Madrid



Shocked and injured victims are tended by rescue workers on the rail track outside Atocha station in Madrid after one of the 10 bombs that ripped through rush-hour trains in the Spanish capital Photograph: Pablo Torres Guerrero-El Pais/Reuters

Giles Tremlett in Madrid

Spain was in a state of profound shock, mourning and anger last night after the worst terrorist attack in Europe since the Lockerbie bombing killed at least 190 people and injured around 1,250 in the capital, Madrid. The Spanish government swiftly suggested that Eta, the Basque separatist group which has a 36-year record of terror attacks in Spain, was to blame for the atrocity. But last night there was confusion over who was responsible after an Arabic tape with Koranic quotes was found in a suspect van near Madrid and at least one group claiming links to Al Qaida said it had planted the bombs.

Spain's interior minister, Angel Acebes, last night said Eta remained the main suspect but added that a van with seven detonators and Arabic-language tapes with Koranic verses had been found in the town of Alcala de Henares outside Madrid. Three of the four trains bombed yesterday originated in Alcala de Henares and one passed through it, the state rail company Renfe said. Last night, the Arabic newspaper Al-Quds al-Arabi said it had received a claim of responsibility for the Madrid train bombings issued by The Brigade of Abu Hafs al-Masri in the name of al-Qaida. However the organisation

has previously made similar claims for other terrorist bombings which later proved to spurious. Last year it claimed to be responsible for a major electricity blackout in north America, the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, and the attacks on the British embassy in Istanbul. Mr Acebes told a news conference: "The conclusion of this morning that pointed to the terrorist organisation [Eta] right now is still the main line of investigation. ... [But] I have given the security forces instructions not to rule out anything."

Ten bombs ripped through rush-hour trains packed with office workers, schoolchildren and others heading for the city centre at about 7.30am, tearing gaping holes in the carriages and causing carnage and devastation. Commuters described appalling scenes of mutilated bodies and seriously injured passengers, including young children and babies, lying in the mangled wreckage of trains at three separate stations in the city.

Shortly after the blasts, Spanish intelligence blamed Eta, pointing to explosive material similar to that used by the organisation in the past and earlier attempts to blow up trains.



Indiscriminate attacks would represent a radical change of tactics for the Basque separatist group and, although Eta never claims responsibility for its attacks immediately, terrorist experts warned that Islamist group such as al-Qaida could not be eliminated. Juergen Storbeck, head of the European Union's police agency Europol, said: "It could have been Eta. ... But we're dealing with an attack that doesn't correspond to the 'modus operandi' they have adopted up to now." Eta's founder, Julen de Madariaga, said it would be unlike the group to attack busy, working-class areas. "It's not Eta's method of working," he told

French television station LCI from the Basque city of San Sebastian.

However, within hours of the blasts government sources pointed to the use of Eta's trademark explosive, Titadine. Police were reported to be hunting for two men who were seen jumping on and off trains further down the line from the places where the explosions took place.

Campaigning in Spain's general election on Sunday was suspended and prime minister José María Aznar, whose People's party had looked set to be voted back in, called

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**'It looked like the platform of death. I've never seen anything like it'**

Giles Tremlett, John Hooper and Jane Walker in Madrid, and Owen Bowcott and Sam Jones

Fourteen-year-old Sara Pedro was preparing for school when she heard the explosion on the track. "I looked out of the window in front of our house and then the second blast occurred," she said. "We hid. When we looked out again, there were bodies lying on the ground and people wandering around with blood all over them. We threw out blankets to help them. My sister went down and had to pick her way through the bodies. I've taken a tranquilliser now. One of the train doors was blown through a neighbour's window."

The early morning commuter train had been trundling into Atocha station, a terminus in the heart of Madrid, when the blast ripped through one of its packed carriages. An ambulance driver described it being cut open "like a can of tuna". It was 7.39am. The rush hour was under way; roads were jammed with traffic, platforms thronged with office workers and children carrying satchels.

Anibal Altamirano, a 26-year-old Ecuadorean who was at the station a few blocks south of the Prado museum, said commuters around him were too stunned to move when the blast reverberated through the building.

But when the second and third explo-

sions came a few moments later on the train everyone fled in panic. "People dropped everything - bags and shoes - and ran, many trampling on others. People didn't know which way to go. Some even ran into the train tunnels without thinking other trains could be coming."

Shortly afterwards four more blasts crippled a second train which was 500 metres outside Atocha as it approached the terminus. In all four commuter trains, mostly carrying workers and secondary school students into the centre of the city from working class neighbourhoods, were destroyed by yesterday's bombings.

Bent, buckled and charred, the carriages were surrounded by fire officers who set about bringing the corpses and the body parts out. "I could see the holes in the wagons. There were bodies lying all around," said Juan Calvo, who also lives opposite the track.

"There was huge cloud of smoke," said another resident. "A piece of metal came flying over here."

A total of 10 bombs exploded in the minutes between 7.39am and 7.45am (6.39am and 6.45am GMT), paralysing the Spanish capital as hundreds of thousands of people set off for work.

Three Madrid stations were targeted: Atocha, El Pozo and Santa Eugenia. The worst carnage was caused by two bombs placed in El Pozo railway station in the south of the capital where a double-

decker, commuter train had just arrived.

Rescuers counted at least 67 bodies strewn across the platforms. One body was blown onto the station's roof. The two blasts were in separate directions, apparently designed to kill people on both platforms and beyond. One explosion ripped through a 15ft-high brick wall, gouging out a vast hole 10ft across. Corpses were entangled in the shredded metal wreckage of carriages.

"It looked like a platform of death," firefighter Juan Redondo said. "I've never seen anything like it before. The recovery of the bodies was very difficult. We didn't know what to pick up."

Beatriz Martín, a doctor who tended to victims at El Pozo, said: "On many bodies, we could hear the person's mobile phones ringing as we carted them away."

Enrique Sanchez, an ambulance worker returning from Santa Eugenia station where another carriage was blown wide open, said: "I saw legs and arms. I won't forget this ever. I've seen horror."

Survivors recounted horrifying details of their experiences on the websites of Spanish newspapers. Samuel Lozano, 24, who was travelling in the rear carriage of one train, told El Mundo: "It was like something from a war zone."

He helped fellow passengers out of the carriages, pulling them through the carriage windows. "There were people with their arms hanging off," he said.

Another survivor at Atocha

**In today's Guardian**

**Sealed with a kiss**  
Radio 4's longstanding soap The Archers finally crossed the Rubicon yesterday when it featured its first - and audible - gay kiss between characters.

**National News page 7**

**Taken to tusk**  
Large amounts of ivory are being sold illegally in UK high streets, in antique markets and on the internet, investigators have discovered.

**National News page 12**

**Crocodile killings**  
Two teenagers have been charged with the murder of two Thai prostitutes who were thrown into a crocodile infested river near Darwin, Australia.

**International News page 18**

**Euthanasia charge**  
New Zealand's most prominent euthanasia advocate is to face court next week charged with the attempted murder of her mother five years ago.

**International News page 18**

**Tanks on the lawn**  
BAE systems was last night considering a counter-bid for Alvis after General Dynamics unveiled an agreed £308m offer for the British armoured vehicle maker.

**Business page 19**

**Dream start**  
England cricketers kicked off their test match tour in the West Indies with an early rzpie - the dismissal of Brian Lara

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