

*MEMORIAL CENTRE  
FOR THE VICTIMS OF TERRORISM*



# Memorial Centre for the Victims of Terrorism

Director

Florencio Domínguez Iribarren

Head of exhibitions

Raúl López Romo

Museography and Design

Estudio GD Gestión de Diseño S.L.



CENTRO MEMORIAL DE LAS  
VÍCTIMAS DEL TERRORISMO  
TERRORISMOAREN BIKITIMEN  
OROIMENERAKO ZENTROA



## ***HERE, YESTERDAY***

The Memorial Centre for the Victims of Terrorism is a space to meet, reflect and defend democratic values, focusing on four main principles: truth, memory, dignity and justice.

"Truth" requires telling the story of terrorism with the utmost rigour and precision in order to comprehend what really happened. The Centre uses the documentation available and the voice of actual victims to educate visitors.

"Memory" helps to ensure that the tremendous injustice of politically motivated violence is not forgotten and serves as a civic lesson so that it is never repeated.

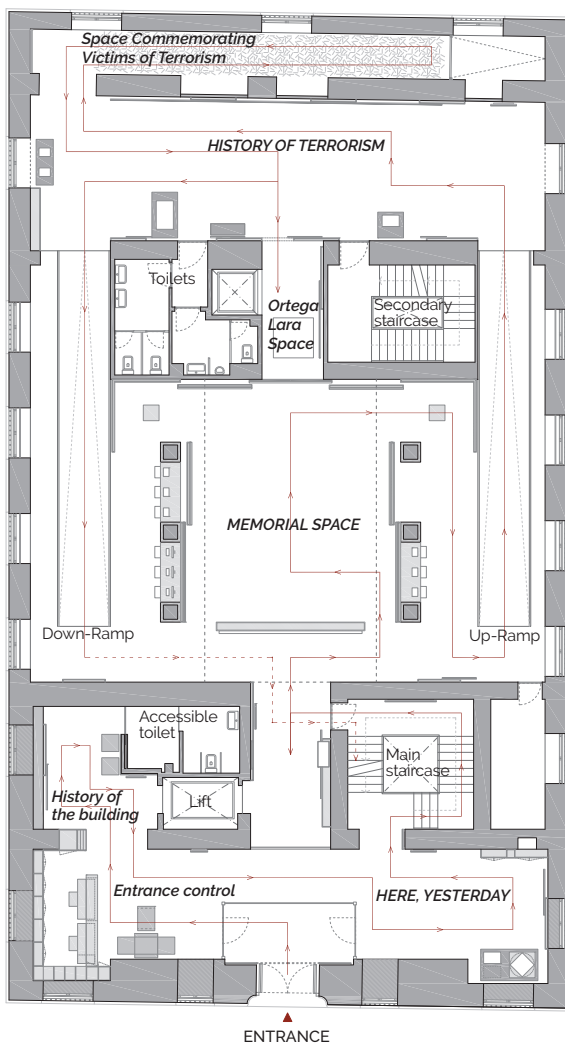
"Dignity", refers to the dignity that victims have never lost despite attempts by perpetrators to stigmatise or manipulate them to achieve their own ends.

"Justice" is the opposite of impunity; it involves determining the responsibility of those who committed the crime. More broadly, it implies that wherever possible democratic institutions and society as a whole amend for victims suffering.

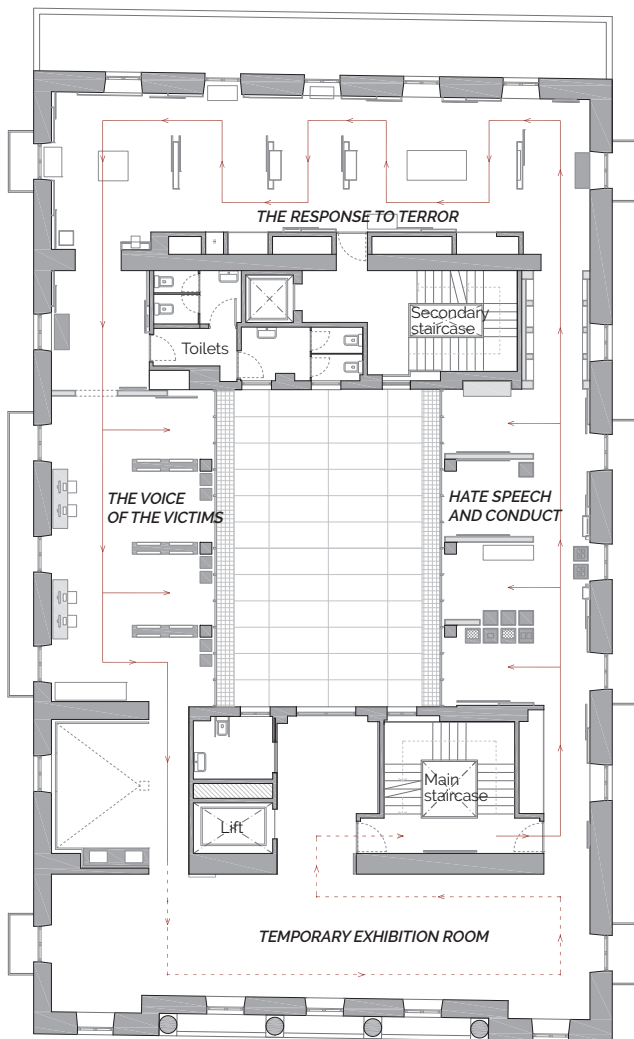
The Memorial Centre provides visitors with a documentation centre, assembly rooms, a classroom and a museum with permanent and temporary exhibitions.

The permanent exhibition is divided into six rooms. The first entitled *Here, yesterday*, is a reception area. From this point onwards visitors will see the exhibition through the eyes of the victims.

## ACCESS AND FIRST FLOOR



## SECOND FLOOR





Velasco Vidal-Abarca family

## **MEMORIAL SPACE**

This area is named after Ana María Vidal-Abarca, a pioneering woman from Vitoria and the driving force behind the creation in December 1980 of the Hermandad de Familiares (today known as the AVT), the first association of victims of terrorism in Spain. She founded the association just a few months after ETA killed her husband, Jesús Velasco.

The central element of the painting by José Ibarrola that presides over the Memorial Space is something we probably all have and use, an umbrella. The umbrella is an omnipresent object in the rainy Basque Country. Ibarrola turns it into a metaphor for that which you think protects you, but which actually does not prevent you from getting wet. A photograph taken at the place where ETA killed his friend José Luis López de Lacalle in 2000 inspired the artist. The victim was lying on the ground covered with a white sheet next to an open red umbrella. Years later, this motif would appear on the cover of Fernando Aramburu's famous novel *Homeland*.

The museum is dedicated to the victims of all terrorist groups that have operated in Spain. They killed to achieve their political goals, whether that was the independence of a territory, as in the case of ETA, imposing a right-wing or left-wing dictatorship, or to implement an inflexible and minority version of Sharia law.





## ***HISTORY OF TERRORISM***

The Memorial Centre also provides historical context, since history is life's teacher. In this room events are set out in the context of time and space.

The timeline starts in 1960 and goes right up to the present day. It is divided into three periods: Franco's dictatorship, transition and democracy. Within them, the most important events of each year in relation to terrorism are summarised: the beginning of ETA, the assassination of Franco's Prime Minister, Luis Carrero Blanco, the massacre at the Rolando cafeteria, the car bombing of the Zaragoza barracks, the GAL and the 11th March attacks, etc.

Terrorism is neither a local nor a recent phenomenon. It appeared in its modern form in the late 19th century and has affected countries on every continent, with such brutal landmarks as the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001. But regardless of the era or the pretext used by terrorists, they all share one principle. For them, the end justifies the bloody means. However, as the humanist Sebastian Castellion argued as early as the 16th century, "to kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, it is to kill a man".



## ***HATE SPEECH AND CONDUCT***

This Memorial Centre is dedicated to the victims of terrorism, but the other side of the coin, that of the perpetrators of violence, also needs to be explored. It is important to identify them and recognise their ideology, their objectives and their methods. Nothing discredits them as much as when their true colours are shown

All terrorist organisations have a number of elements in common: political intentionality, fanaticism and the use of violence to terrorise their opponents. They only differ in terms of ideology or tactics.

This room is divided into four areas. The first deals with ETA, the organisation that has killed the most, has lasted the longest and has received the greatest support from parts of society in Spain. ETA's ultimate goal was the independence of the Basque Country. In an attempt to achieve this goal between 1968 and 2010, ETA murdered 853 people, wounded 2,600, kidnapped more than 80 and threatened or forced into exile an incalculable number.

The second area focuses on ultra-right-wing and vigilante terrorism, active during Spain's transition. Between 1983 and 1987 a group of politicians and law enforcement officers created the GAL, an anti-ETA terrorist organisation that murdered 27 people.

The third area concentrates on extreme left-wing terrorism. In Spain, this kind of terrorism is embodied in the GRAPO, Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre (*First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups*).

And in the fourth area, the main terrorist threat that persists today - jihadist extremism, responsible for massacres such as that of 11th March 2004.



## ***THE RESPONSE TO TERROR***

This room is divided into several parts focusing on police, legal, political and social responses to terrorism. Members of the security forces were essential in combating this scourge, with milestones such as the arrest of all ETA leaders in Bidart and the dismantling of the GRAPO. But they also paid a high price. They are the ones who suffered the greatest number of victims. If for the terrorists and their acolytes law enforcement officers are nothing more than a uniform reflecting everything they hate, this area gives them a human face and restores their dignity.

The Ajuria Enea Agreement, signed by all Basque democratic parties, is the best example of unity against terrorism, but the political response to terrorism has been full of ups and downs.

The story of terrorism is a dark one, but it also has a brighter side because it is also the story of those who stood up for themselves, publicly denounced the murders and threats and, in short, helped to mobilise society. Pacifist and civic movements were embodied in associations such as Gesto por la Paz, winner of the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord in 1993, and Basta Ya, winner of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2000.



Luis Alberto García, *El País*

## ***THE VOICE OF THE VICTIMS***

Although the presence of victims is a constant throughout the Centre, the sixth and last room of the permanent exhibition is a space specifically dedicated to listening to their direct testimonies. Central to the very idea of the Memorial Centre is the provision of a space where victims can explain their experiences in their own words.

These testimonies have appeared or been made at different times and places: they include interviews given to the media, appearances in documentaries or talks in schools. They are a heart wrenching collection, but their enormous educational value means they need to be heard. The large screens show a selection of testimonies of victims of different forms of terrorism. The complete archive of over a thousand testimonies is stored on computers. More are still being added to this day.

Victims of terrorism had a life that was cut short, not because of an accident, but because of someone's deliberate action. We could have been in their shoes. That is why, as Primo Levi said, "it is everyone's duty to think about what happened".

Far from giving all the answers, this exhibition is an invitation to reflect on three main questions: first, how could this have happened? Second, what would I have done under those circumstances? And third, what can I do to prevent it from happening again?

## ***INFORMATION***

**Memorial Centre for the Victims of Terrorism**

[www.memorialvt.com](http://www.memorialvt.com)

[memorial@centromemorialvt.com](mailto:memorial@centromemorialvt.com)

**Address - Phone number**

c/ Lehendakari Aguirre, 2

01001 Vitoria-Gasteiz

+34 945 198 130



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