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[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#)
[W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#) [Misc](#)

Contents

- [Investigation](#)
- [Arrests](#)
- [Charges](#)
- [Political response](#)
- [Observances following the attacks](#)
- [The Spanish general election](#)
- [See also](#)
- [External links](#)

Browse A-Z

[A](#)
[B](#)
[C](#)
[D](#)
[E](#)
[F](#)
[G](#)
[H](#)
[I](#)
[J](#)
[K](#)
[L](#)
[M](#)
[N](#)
[O](#)
[P](#)
[Q](#)
[R](#)
[S](#)
[T](#)
[U](#)



[12 March](#): An estimated 1.5 million people filled Barcelona's Passeig de Gràcia

The [11 March 2004 Madrid train bombings](#) were followed by an intensive criminal in leading to the arrest of several people, and massive street demonstrations in numer cities. Three days after the attacks, the presiding Spanish government was defeatec [general election](#).

Investigation

Following the attacks, initial suspicions focused on the [Basque](#) armed separatist gro Fatherland and Liberty") or ETA, although suggestions that the [Islamist](#) organisation responsible were also immediately advanced.

These suggestions were strengthened when a van was found parked outside the rail [Alcal  de Henares](#), containing audio tapes of verses of the [Qur'an](#), as well as cloth and copper detonators. Furthermore, forensic analysis of an undetonated bomb four outside El Pozo indicated that neither the explosives nor the detonators used in the the type normally used by ETA. The detonators were made of copper, while ETA us detonators. Also, the explosive allegedly used, [Goma-2](#) made in Spain by [Uni n Explosivos](#), was unlike the foreign-made [Titadine](#) brand explosive used by ETA, tho Goma-2 has been denied [\[1\]](#). The design of the bomb, in which a cell phone was us

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remote control device, also did not conform to customary ETA design.

The importance of these findings was that this was the only complete bomb recover investigation. The detonators were of the same type found in the van outside the sta Henares. The cell phones were modified with two holes drilled near the power uptake. Altered phones had been found on a previous occasion during a police investigation activity.

According to police sources, the attacks were carried out by a group of six [Moroccan](#) suspected that one of the bombers died in the blasts, although analysis of the autopsy had earlier suggested an absence of suicide bombers among the dead.

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On [March 30](#), interior minister Angel Acebes said that the [Moroccan Islamic Combat](#) the "investigators' priority," although he insisted that other terrorist organisations had not.

Letter

The [London](#)-based [Arabic](#) newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* reported receiving an e-mail on [11 March](#), from someone claiming to be from al-Qaida and claiming responsibility. The letter was signed by the "[Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades](#)". The newspaper had previously received letters from the same group claiming responsibility, on behalf of al-Qaida, for the bombings of [synagogues](#) in [Turkey](#) on [November 15, 2003](#) and the [United Nations](#) headquarters on [August 19, 2003](#).

The letter referred to the bombings as "settling old accounts with Spain the crusader reference to the [Christian reconquista](#) of Spain that ended in [1492](#) and the subsequent expulsion of Muslims from the country. [Osama bin Laden](#) has also previously used the term to refer to the [States](#) and the [United Kingdom](#), drawing a parallel between the UK/US presence in Iraq and the medieval [Crusades](#). ([President Bush](#) once called the war on terror a "crusade" use the term again, due to its sensitivity among Muslims with the exception of a function distributed among conservative Christians two years later.)

The letter also referred to Spain's alliance with the United States in "its war against Iraq" and warned that a major attack against the US was "90 percent ready". The message of the Death Smoke Squad will reach you and you will see your people dead in the thousands. He advised Muslims around the world "not to come near civilian or military institutions or

The letter also stated that "the death squad has penetrated the heart of one of the partners in the crusader alliance, Spain, and dealt a painful blow," and asks "Aznar, where is America? protect you from us? Great Britain, Japan, Italy and the others? When we attacked you at [Nasiriya](#) and sent you and the American agents an ultimatum to withdraw from the alliance, you did not get the message. Now we make it clear and we hope this time the Brigades of Abu Hafs al-Masri feel no sorrow for so-called civilians. If it is OK for children, women, elderly and young in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Kashmir, why kill yours?"

However, the veracity of these claims has been questioned. The Abu Hafs al-Masri history of making false claims of responsibility, notably claiming that they had caused [America blackout](#) when it was in fact the result of a cascading failure in the electricity network.

Videotape

According to Spanish Interior Minister [Ángel Acebes](#), a Madrid television station [TVE](#) received a phone call on [13 March](#) from a man speaking in [Arabic](#) with a Moroccan accent, announcing that a videotape claiming responsibility for the attacks could be found in the vicinity of a Madrid mosque. On the tape, a man speaking Arabic with a Moroccan accent in an Arabic dress claimed the group was responsible for the bombings.

The videotaped message, in translation, went as follows:

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MORE E-COURSES

We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid exactly two and a half years after the attacks on New York and Washington. It is a response to your collaboration with the United States and his allies. This is a response to the crimes that you have caused in the world, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more, if God wills it. You love life and we love death. This is an example of what the Prophet Muhammad said. If you don't stop your injustice, more blood will flow and these attacks will seem very small compared to what you can call terrorism. This is a statement by the military spokesman for al-Qaida in Europe, Abu Dujan al-Afghani.

Interior Ministry officials said it was unclear whether that the concluding claim meant [Abu Dujan al-Afghani](#) himself or that he was speaking in his name. Acebes said the tape was known to intelligence agencies, and that they were checking the tape's authenticity. [March](#) the tape was confirmed to be authentic.

Arrests

In the afternoon of [13 March 2004](#), seven suspects were arrested around Madrid in connection with the sale and falsification of a cellphone and pre-paid card found inside the unexploded bomb found at El Pozo station. Three of them were described as [Moroccan](#) citizens, two as Spaniards and two as Spaniards of Indian origin. The two Spaniards were picked up for questioning but not formally arrested, but remained in custody the next day and were released two days later. Three Moroccans were identified as Jamal Zougam, 30; Mohamed Bekkali, 31, a Moroccan; and Mohamed Chaoui, 34, a worker; all three from northern Morocco. The two Indians were Vinay Kohly and Suresh Kumar. Three of the suspects had previous police or judicial records. One suspect was under investigation for suspected participation in murder. One suspect may have had connections with Moroccan extremist groups. It was apparently alleged that the arrested suspect provided logistical support to the actual perpetrators of the attacks.

Zougam, the main suspect, had already been under surveillance since May of 2003, after the bombings in [Casablanca](#) against Jewish and Spanish targets killed 33 people and 1 Moroccan. Casablanca bombings were blamed on [Salafia Jihadia](#), a secretive, ultra-radical offshoot of the [Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group](#), which is suspected of having links to al-Qaida.

Zougam is mentioned in the investigation of the al-Qaida cell allegedly involved in the attacks, and in a separate investigation into Afghan recruitment rings. Zougam faces charges in Morocco, but is suspected of having ties to the radical Islamic movement. Moroccan suspects had no police record at home. One of the arrested suspects was a two-time survivor of the blast who said they saw him before the explosions took place.

On [13 March](#) [San Sebastián](#) police detained an [Algerian](#) named Ali Amrous who allegedly had information about a terrorist attack in Madrid two months before it occurred. Amrous, an apparent first-time offender, was first arrested in January 2004 after a neighborhood disturbance and made the threat while being questioned by police, saying that "we will fill Madrid with the dead." Although he was connected at a high level with any terrorist group but may have known about the attack in advance. Amrous was questioned and then released on [19 March](#).

Five additional suspects were arrested on [18 March](#) around Alcalá de Henares. The suspects were identified as Moroccans Farid Oulad Ali, a construction worker, Abdelhak Saad Houssaini; one as a Spanish citizen, arrested in Asturias region in northern Spain in connection with investigation of robbery of explosives; and a fifth as Mohamed El Hadi Chedadi, the Chedadi, an alleged al-Qaida operative arrested in 2001. One of those arrested was believed to have played a major role in the attack and was also wanted over the Casablanca bombings.

Four suspects were arrested on [22 March](#). These included three picked up in Madrid district, a multiethnic neighborhood where chief suspect Jamal Zougam ran a cell phone shop. The fourth was arrested in Getafe, a suburb of Spain's capital.

On [31 March](#) news agencies reported that international arrest warrants for five suspects were issued by the Spanish judge investigating the attacks. A Moroccan national, Abdelkrim Belkaid, named as the alleged mastermind of the Madrid and Casablanca attacks with the role of either having been among the perpetrators or to have played a supporting role. ([BBC](#))

On [3 April 2004](#), as police moved in to arrest some suspects in an apartment building the suspects blew themselves up, killing a special forces agent and wounding 11 others according to a [report from CBC News](#). No bystanders were reported injured, as the apartments had previously been evacuated. Among the dead suspects were the Moroccan [Ahmidan](#), Asri Rifat Anouar and Abdennabi Kounjaa, and the [Tunisian Sarhane Ben Fakhet](#). Fakhet was described as the ringleader of the Madrid bombing. One dead suspect yet identified by [April 5](#).

On [6 May](#), [Brandon Mayfield](#) was arrested at his office in [West Slope, Oregon](#) on the fingerprint found on a bag containing detonating devices was identified as his by the lawyer and family protested that Mayfield had not been to Spain for at least ten years. Other ties to the attacks, he remained in jail and incommunicado for two weeks as a Spanish authorities, who had been doubtful of the identification, finally announced that their initial identification was incorrect, and Mayfield was at last released by the US.

On [8 June](#), police in [Milan](#) arrested [Rabei Osman el Sayed Ahmed](#) for belonging to a terrorist organization. Spain announced that he was a "mastermind" of the Madrid attacks. Fakhet and [Amer El Azizi](#), a Moroccan, one of 10 suspects still at large.

In August, [2005 Abdelmajid Bouchar](#), 22-year-old Moroccan, was arrested in [Serbia](#) with documents and claiming to be Iraqi citizen. After 20 days he was identified as one of the suspects. Extradiction process is under way.

Charges

On [19 March 2004](#), Spanish authorities publicly accused, for the first time, three Moroccans of involvement in the attacks. Spanish judge Juan del Olmo charged Jamal Zougam, Mohamed and Mohamed Chaoui with 190 murders (those of bodies identified at the time), 1,430 murders, and membership of a terrorist group. The three Moroccans claimed in court that they were at home in bed when the bombs went off and denied having anything to do with the attacks. The Indian men, Vinay Kohly and Suresh Kumar, were charged with collaborating with a terrorist group and falsifying a sales document.

The five suspects, who had been kept in a holding cell in a police station, were sent to jail on Madrid's northern outskirts early on [19 March 2004](#) and ordered by del Olmo to be incommunicado, barring contact with lawyers and family members. The charges mean they could be jailed for up to two years while investigators gather evidence to try to bring them to trial. They can be held for an additional two years, be indicted and put on trial, or be released if there is insufficient evidence to try them.

Four more suspects were charged on [23 March 2004](#). Spaniard Jos   Emilio Su  arez was charged of providing explosives for the attacks, with 190 counts of murder, 1,430 counts of attempted murder, 1,430 counts of robbery and collaborating or belonging to a terrorist organization. Moroccan Abderrazak Berrak was charged with all those same offenses except robbery. Mohamed El Hadi Chedadi and Berrak, also Moroccans, were charged with collaborating with or belonging to a terrorist organization.

Political response

Spanish leaders across the political spectrum responded to the attacks by reaffirming their values. They also asserted that terrorists must not be allowed to achieve their political goals through killings; a stance that is reiterated after every violent ETA action in Spain.

In a press conference on [12 March](#), Prime Minister Aznar, while not discarding any possibility of investigation regarding the perpetrators, said that "this is not the time" to discuss political decisions. He also announced 140 million euros in aid to victims, granted Spanish nationality to affected foreigners, and promised legal residency to illegal immigrants affected by the attacks. He also said he did not give the benefit of the doubt to the mouthpieces of illegal organizations. In reference to the comments of Arnaldo Otegi of Batasuna shortly after the attacks that the attacks were a political statement, Aznar said: "The attacks were a political statement, but they were not a political act."

Since the attacks occurred three days before a general election, they soon became a political controversy. Opposition politicians and commentators urged the government to take action.

and more forthcoming about the information they had on the perpetrators. [Socialist Jos Luis Rodrguez Zapatero](#) said that "the political response must be different, whether it was an al-Qaida or ETA attack." Later in the day, he limited his comments "the utmost diligence" in publicizing information regarding the attacks and encouraged attend the demonstrations scheduled for the evening. He also called for a meeting of political parties on Monday to "stand up to the murderers" together.

[Juan Jos Ibarretxe Markuartu](#), head of government in the [Basque Country](#), said it right to know the truth and, above all, it is something that is owed to the victims and stressed that, while not changing the human tragedy, the political interpretation of it depended on who has carried them out. [Josep-Llus Carod-Rovira](#) of the Catalan n the , who had recently come under fire for secretly meeting with ETA and advocated he was convinced that "the government delays and hides information" and demanded government clarify before the election whether al-Qaida was to blame.

Claiming that the government held the information about the van found outside the / [Jos Blanco](#) of the [PSOE](#) said he believed the government would withhold information 14 March elections. Similar statements were made by members of the Basque region [Gaspar Llamazares](#) of the [United Left](#) (the electoral front of the [Communist Party of](#) government to provide "the truth, all the truth and nothing but the truth", which is the witnesses' oaths at a trial in Spain.

[Mariano Rajoy](#), the ruling [People's Party](#)'s candidate for prime minister and a member cabinet, stressed that he was more interested than anyone in knowing who was responsible further noted that he lent no credibility to the claims of responsibility by an al-Qaida . said that "no distinctions can be made between terrorists". Deputy Prime Minister [Ja](#) defended the idea that ETA was responsible, recalling that "they have attempted it on occasions". Aznar responded to criticism by promising that "we will tell the Spanish people we know".

Interior Minister Acebes insisted that ETA was the most likely culprit, drawing parallels train massacres at [Chamartn](#) and [Vall d'Aran](#) rail stations during the Christmas season 2003, respectively. He reported the finding of another unexploded bomb in a duffel bag explosives and shrapnel, with a detonator of the same type as was found in the van also indicated that the Spanish government doubts, based on intelligence, that the claim responsibility submitted to a London newspaper is authentic.

The Association of Arabic Entrepreneurs in Spain condemned the attacks and said that community feared for their personal security should a connection to al-Qaida be confirmed.

In Pamplona, an off-duty [National Police](#) agent shot dead his neighbour baker associated with an association of relatives of ETA prisoners. The police officer immediately gave himself a self-inflicted wound. Apparently, the baker was involved in an argument with the wife and son of the police officer. The baker demanded that the baker display a flag with a black ribbon and a banner against ETA. ETA prisoners protested demonstrating and rioting on the streets.

On the evening of [13 March](#), thousands of demonstrators, demanding to know who was responsible for the attacks before the general election the following day, gathered in front of Popular Party government delegations in several major cities. Police monitored these spontaneous demonstrations and in some cases asked demonstrators to produce identification. The Madrid demonstration was cordoned off and riot police were called to stand by. Such spontaneous demonstrations are illegal under Spanish law.

Mariano Rajoy called the demonstrations "undemocratic pressure on tomorrow's election." The Popular Party filed a complaint with the Central Electoral Board, as the day before a general election is intended to be a "day of reflection" and no political campaigning is allowed. The Central Electoral Board later certified the illegality of the demonstrations. Earlier in the day, the United Nations Human Rights Council separate claim against the publication in the newspaper *El Mundo* of an interview with Aznar in which he asked voters for "an absolute majority" in Sunday's elections.

The demonstrations against the People's Party were apparently organized over [internet](#).

using cell phones. In particular, the demonstration in Barcelona seems to have followed tactics, moving quickly from one location to another by breaking up into smaller groups. Included in the chants were "We want the truth before voting," "Liars, liars, who did it?", "Aznar, we all know who got us into this?", "this happens to us for having a fascist government", "against the price of oil", "this is the price of oil", and "your war, our dead".

According to [this story](#), one man, who claimed to have no connection to political parties, angered by national TV station coverage of the investigation, sent a message to ten thousand people to "pass it on", and did not expect thousands of people to join the demonstration.

Observances following the attacks

In the wake of the attacks, Prime Minister Aznar declared three days of [national mourning](#). Flags were lowered to half-mast and all television stations displayed a logo of a [black ribbon](#). The [European Parliament](#) declared [11 March](#) a memorial day to commemorate the victims of terrorism. The European presidency under [Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern](#) called for an EU-wide three minutes' silence at noon Spanish time (11:00 UTC) on Monday [15 March](#).

[King Juan Carlos](#) addressed the nation directly for the first time (apart from his annual Christmas addresses) since defusing the attempted military [coup](#) of [February 23, 1981](#). In his speech, he made no explicit reference to either ETA or al-Qaida. [Queen Sofía](#), the [Prince of Asturias](#), and the Prince's fiancée [Letizia Ortiz](#) visited the wounded and medical personnel at Gregorio Marañón hospital.

Spontaneous demonstrations, largely directed against ETA, broke out across Spain on [March 11](#) as the news of the attack became known, in advance of scheduled demonstrations set for the following day at 19:00. [2] [Lehendakari \(Basque Country President\) Juan José Ibarretxe](#) condemned the attacks, saying that "when ETA attacks, the Basque heart breaks into a thousand pieces". He invited the Basque population to demonstrate in silence in front of city halls and municipal buildings.

To put these spontaneous demonstrations in context, it should be noted that for years (and consistently since the kidnapping and murder of [Miguel Ángel Blanco](#)) Spaniards have reacted to ETA actions by demonstrating on the streets in this fashion, either spontaneously or at the behest of political parties.

On [12 March](#), some 11.4 million people, more than a quarter of Spain's 40 million population, demonstrated in cities across the country. This tally competes with the imprecise figure of 10 million protesters worldwide for the [protests against the Iraq war on 15 February, 2003](#), which the [Guinness Book of Records](#) listed as the largest mass protest movement in history. On the same day, U.S. President [George W. Bush](#) led an observance at the residence of the Spanish ambassador in Washington, laying a wreath at the flagpole and speaking there. He also gave interviews with a Spanish television network. [3]

Two million of Madrid's four million citizens demonstrated in the pouring rain, chanting cries such as "we were all on that train", "we're not all here, 200 are missing", "Spain

| Source: [El Mundo](#)

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Protest turnout

11,400,000
(out of 40,000,000)



Flag_spain_black_ribbon.

[Flag of Spain](#) with [black ribbon](#) of national mourning



11-M.png

[11 March/Madrid: We are all Madrid](#)

[Barcelona](#)

[Valencia](#) (pop. 780,000)

[Seville](#) (pop. 700,000)

[Zaragoza](#) (pop. 620,000)

[Vigo](#) (pop. 290,000)

[Oviedo](#) (pop. 203,000)

[Cádiz](#) (pop. 160,000)

[Murcia](#) (pop. 380,000)

[Bilbao](#) (pop. 350,000)

[Valladolid](#) (pop. 320,000)

[Alicante](#) (pop. 310,000)

[Logroño](#) (pop. 120,000)

[Jaén](#) (pop. 110,000)

[Pamplona](#) (pop. 171,000)

[Santander](#)

united will never be defeated", "They are chickens without their guns," or "Murderers, murderers". Originally planned as a march from [Plaza de Colón](#) to Atocha, the demonstration filled the entire planned route of the march and the adjacent streets.

[Ourense](#) (pop. 109,000)

[Las Palmas](#) (pop. 365,000)

[Lugo](#)

The Prince of Asturias and his sisters [Elena](#) and [Cristina](#) took part in the demonstration in history a member of the Spanish royal family has done so. [Antonio María Cardín](#), Archbishop of Madrid, also took part in his first demonstration. Prime Minister Aznar, Commission head Romano Prodi, Italian Prime Minister [Silvio Berlusconi](#), Portuguese: [José Manuel Durão Barroso](#), British Deputy Prime Minister [John Prescott](#) and French Minister [Jean-Pierre Raffarin](#) also took part, as did the German, Swedish, and Moroccan foreign affairs.

One and a half million people turned out in [Barcelona](#), under the slogan *Avui jo també madrileny* ("Today I too am Madrilenian"). Hundreds of thousands turned out in [Bilbao](#), [Valencia](#), and other cities across Spain. In some cities, turnout for the protests actually exceeded the city's population, due to inflows from surrounding regions.

On [March 13](#) thousands of people demonstrated at People's party headquarters accusing the government of manipulating information. Participants claimed the demonstration came out spontaneously and were organized by SMS messaging through cell phones. The government claimed the demonstrations had been engineered by the Socialist Party. Even after investigation into the bombings the issue remains controversial.

3,000 people gathered before Popular Party headquarters at Calle Génova in Madrid at 3 p.m., marching through Puerta del Sol to Atocha after Midnight. The demonstration drew thousands of people at Atocha. Dwindling, but still in the thousands, demonstrators returned to Popular Party headquarters around 4:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. In Barcelona, a march of 150 people started around 7:40 p.m. at Rambla de Canaletas and grew to 3,000 before it turned into a demonstration at Plaza de Sant Jaume. 7,000 people demonstrated in front of the Communist Party headquarters, also in Barcelona. 1,500 people demonstrated in Santiago de Compostela in Zaragoza and 1,000 in Valencia. In other cities gatherings numbered in the hundreds.

The Spanish general election

Spain's Socialists scored a dramatic upset in elections [14 March](#), unseating the ruling Popular Party. One interpretation of the result attributes it to anger amongst voters that the government had not taken their view, being honest about the investigation of the attacks, while initially blaming ETA. The government had insisted that its prime suspect in the bombings was ETA, while the opposition had evidence mounted of an Islamic link. The government was accused of withholding information about the investigation to save the election. Conservative commentators claim that the opposition won the election.

Until the attacks the People's Party appeared to have a good chance to win a third consecutive term in power, although it was expected to take a plurality of seats in Congress (the lower house of parliament) rather than the majority they held since [March 2000](#). It was the first time that the government had backed the Iraq war had been up for re-election, and it lost. Incoming prime minister [Rodríguez Zapatero](#) had pledged to bring home the 1,300 troops that Spain had sent to Iraq, and after the election he stated his intention to do so when their tour of duty ended in Iraq.

Voters turned out in large numbers to cast their vote, many of them wearing the blue and white of national grief. Turnout soared to 77.2 percent from 68.7 at the last general election. For details of the election result, see [Spanish general election, 2004](#).

It will always be uncertain whether or not the outcome of the election was the result of the [11 March](#) attack. However, there exists some significant data. For example, the mail vote (cast before the attack) followed a distribution far more similar to what was expected by opinion polls. That is, the Popular Party was still the winner although it lost votes compared to the result of the election. If the results obtained on [14 March](#) would have been the same as those of the European elections three months later (when the Socialist Party had been governing for less than two months), the Popular Party would have won.

Socialist Party had also won with 162 seats but the Popular Party would have obtained a closer result than the real one (the Socialist Party won with 164 seats and the Popular Party only 148). Also, the PP's vote changed little between 2000 and 2004, but the PSOE lost 1 million votes (roughly the same as the increase in voter participation) between 2000

See also

* [11 March 2004 Madrid attacks](#)

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