

JOSÉ ÁNGEL CUERDA, IGNACIO ELLACURIA COOPERATION AWARD

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vONI6ld_rdA&feature=youtu.be

The Lehendakari of the Basque Government, Iñigo Urkullu, is going to present this afternoon (January 26, 2016) to the former mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz, José Ángel Cuerda, the *Ignacio Ellacuria Award for International Cooperation*, which is the highest distinction that the institutions of the Basque Country grant in matters of development cooperation to Basque personalities and entities. The [award](#) commemorates the well-known [Jesuit liberation theologian](#) assassinated by the army of [El Salvador](#) and whose death precisely inspired a deep relationship between El Salvador and the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz through numerous development cooperation projects in social, economic, urban and educational matters. José Ángel Cuerda himself was a visiting professor at the Central American University for many years and today continues to be a reference for many in that country. Today it is yours who, through your highest authority, wants to recognize the pioneering and visionary role in international cooperation that the former mayor of Gasteiz had throughout his long period in charge of the Basque capital.

At Naider we are very lucky to have him as the inspiration for our own transformation project. A few years ago we awarded him the [Naider Action and Commitment Award](#) in its first edition. His powerful message, loaded with experience and intelligence, still reverberates in the ears of all those who attended the delivery of that distinction, although in reality the distinguished ones were ourselves.

José Ángel Cuerda was twenty years in charge of the government of his city. From 1979 to 1999. Throughout all those years he managed to mobilize an entire city in the process towards an open and supportive society. It configured Vitoria-Gasteiz on a sustainable and balanced development model, achieving a radical transformation of it and raising it to the top positions in quality of life, urban planning, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. His work has been recognized internationally and Vitoria-Gasteiz continues to be a reference example today in some matters promoted at that stage.

But what Cuerda is specifically recognized for today is his commitment to the development of peoples oppressed by the tyrannies of war, poverty, or oppression. Today their solidarity and didactic work to inculcate the values of cooperation and international solidarity at the municipal level are rewarded. Co-creator in his day of [Euskal Fondoa](#), the association of Basque entities for the cooperation, José Ángel Cuerda championed the solidarity of its citizens and made Vitoria the first municipality to allocate 0.7% of its budget to cooperation projects. That figure was soon exceeded.

The former mayor of Gasteiz continues today, at his soon to be 83 years old, actively involved in the vicissitudes of his city through various platforms and non-governmental organizations. He is a tireless intellectual and his wisdom and moral authority are still fully valid in today's Vitoria, whose collective imagination can no longer be conceived without the virtues of solidarity and equality that inspired all his work.

We rescued for you a small video that we recorded at the time. It is a nice way to get closer to this unique and irreplaceable person to whom today his country once again pays tribute.

