

December  
2008

For Mutual Aid  
& Solidarity

# DARK NIGHTS

## Support the Italian life prisoners in struggle Against life sentence and all prisons

*"...What does it feel like to be condemned to life in prison?"*

*Well, imagine that all your worse fears be brought together."* (by an Italian life prisoner)

The 1st of December 2008 is a date that some of us wrote with big letters on their agendas: on this day, the Italian life prisoners will begin to struggle.

Not to say that their life would not be a daily struggle, buried in the dungeons of Italian prisons, with no hope left for their future; indeed, they have none, since when one speak about life sentence in Italy, this is meant literally: life sentence.

However, several life prisoners chose to begin a public struggle from this date on, by using the mean of the hunger strike on relay: to say, that every week there will be a different region doing this strike, until mid-March 2009, where the strike will end. The mobilization will begin on the 1st of December, where all regions will make a day of hunger strike.

### What do prisoners fight against?

"Not everybody knows what a life sentence really is. One is lead to think that it is simply another form of detention like many regimes. One is convinced that a person condemned to 'life' after a certainly long amount of time will finally be released.

Maybe, once this really was the case. But now, in a country where one security emergency is followed by another and that is followed by yet another, lifers have no hope of being set free. This is, in fact, a country where people are induced into fearing crime because this fear, rising within the population, can help some politicians along in their career.

Crime is considered in fact a sort of 'illness that politicians promise regularly to 'cure'. Within this system people who have been condemned to life imprisonment will really never be released!" (from a letter by Alfredo Sole, life prisoner in Livorno).

If you are sentenced to life in Italy (and you can get sentenced to several life sentence, one of the many aberration of the penal code), this means you will not be able to accede to any beneficial measures: no day leave, no parole, nothing. That's it simply.

It means the State captures your life in its totality, forever.

Within the European Union, in theory, the life penalty no longer exists as all countries foresee the possibility of reviewing the sentence and the application of conditional freedom once a certain amount of time has elapsed since a prisoner was brought into custody. This is generally referred to as 'a life sentence subject to periodical revision'. The amount of time involved varies from one state to another. It is of 26 years in Italy, 20/25 in the UK, 20 in Greece, 15 in France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, 12 in Denmark and 7 years in Ireland.

Surely, still an inhuman violence, but at least one can still see some little light in the distance.

In Italy, somebody decided to switch off all lights.

In this country, life sentences becomes really life covering for many prisoners due to the fact that offenders who have been condemned in relation to crimes classified as undergoing the 41 bis\* regime, or whose offences are considered not compatible with benefits given by law or are considered as refusing to cooperate with law enforcement.

This is the very moment where the State shows what it means by making its mouth full of talks about so called re-socialization, re-education, reintegration into society.

Indeed, when talking about life sentence, all the empty promises and the knots are coming to the comb: one's aims are not the aforementioned ones, but apply a medieval punishment in a modern form: instead of physical tortures (which anyway are also contemplated within daily prison reality, no matter what your sentence looks like), one found out one which can be better resold to the public opinion, by capturing somebody's life for eternity, eliminating any chance for hope. The State throws its mask.

### What do prisoners fight for?

In their words: "Against life sentence: because the hope towards coming free again is needed in order to not transform a punishment into a psychological and

social death; the respect of the article 5 of the universal Declaration of Human rights dated 1948: nobody should be subjected to tortures, or to a cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; an inquiry Commission of the European Parliament about prisons in Europe." (from a letter signed by Spoleto's life prisoners to all Italian and European prisoners: you can find this complete letter, as well as others, in our *Entfesselt* coming out by mid-November).

Surely, as anarchists our aim is not to struggle for "Rights" in the first place.

Still, our aim is also to create awareness and spread solidarity whenever a social, self organized struggle outbursts and people stand up against the present conditions, striving for liberation: in this sense, we see our role in widening this struggle here on the outside, where we encounter much less limitations than someone locked up, in making the struggle of prisoners ours, in not limiting it to formal requests. Also, within also a "intermediate" struggle, each individual has the possibility to develop affinity with alikes and deepen his/her vision of the world and struggle.

That is why we understand why prisoners put forward such requests that might appear as not really revolutionary for many, we explained already in our text about the hunger strike happened in German prisons in August this year (to be found in *Entfesselt*, September/October or on the websites of 325 or ABC Berlin).

We believe the role of anarchists and other rebels to lie into radicalizing social struggles whenever they happen, as far as we can, push them to their limits.

### A first experience of struggle?

Italian prisons saw a high and radical level of struggle for many years, especially during the 70's and the beginning of 80's. However, several factors contributed to break solidarity inside the walls: State-planned diffusion of hard-drugs, individualization, repentance, disassociation, blackmailing of rebel prisoners by introducing beneficial measures upon good behavior, psychological control by experts and many others.

No different to the development occurred in all the rest of the world (although we refer here especially on the its "western" part).

Therefore during the last years, struggles reduced or have been mostly limited to support specific prisoners.

One year ago, prisoners decided they had enough. One year ago, life prisoners stood up against their situation and criticized prison itself, by calling for an undetermined hunger strike until they would have reached at least some of their requests: the latter being not especially abnormal, since they "merely" asked that a discussion on the topic of abolishment of the life sentence should be brought on in parliament.

However, the Italian State and its judicial authorities couldn't be bothered, and life prisoners decided to stop after roughly two weeks, as soon as they have realized that there would not be any echo of their struggle reaching the ears of the ones in power.

Many prisoners believed that journalists, sympathetic politicians and democratic judicial authorities would have spent at least a word in their favor.

However, this sounds to us rather as a contradiction in terms: prisoners are worth for the press only since the latter can endlessly reconfirm their scribbler role by writing about the explosion of criminality and its gruesome protagonists; prisoners are worth for the politicians, only when they need to use them as scapegoats in order to justify their politics of social control, allegedly based on the "enormous" rise of the criminal rate, despite the fact this actually decreases and it is anyway produced by the present social (un)conditions; prisoners are worth for democratic magistrates, only since the latter make their living out of them.

All in all it proved again what anarchists and other people who came at daggers drawn with this society say permanently: do not believe such vultures, believe rather all the ones who struggle on your side carrying no other interest than developing relations in struggle in order to overthrow the present system.

#### **A few words about the situation in Germany...**

On August this year, German prisoners also decided to undertake a struggle against their conditions and prison at all.

After many years of silence, a self organized struggle began inside the walls, undertaken by the prisoners association I.v.l. and anarchist individualities: one week of collective hunger strike against their condition of detention and prison reality.

From outside, several people tried to show their solidarity in different ways.

A new situation, which lighted the spark of a new, potential situation of rupture inside German prisons, generally dominated by apathy and conform behavior, beside few outstanding exceptions.

To show that this was not a papertiger, German prisoners call as well to support the hunger strike of Italian life sentence prisoners by undertaking as well a hunger strike: because international solidarity can not remain an empty word.

In the words of Gabriel Pombo da Silva, Spanish anarchist imprisoned since 4 years in Aachen:

"...The German molecular prisons (exported in Spain on the beginning of the 80's) carry a very precise instrumental functionality: to classify, to put in order, to discipline and disassociate prisoners through dispersion, isolation and individualization. Inside a "space", where individuals neither know, nor recognize themselves as "equals", it is difficult that a "feeling of community" might arise, but rather one of indifference, competitiveness, egoism... (...)

Inside German prisons (more and more imitated on an international level), one will be divided from his/her friends and comrades already from the very beginning of his/her reclusion (through dispersion); than, once inside, one studies with attention what "they" call "psychological profiles" of prisoners, so that they will not be able to develop any relation of affinity which might turn problematic for the administration. (...)

For these reasons and many more we, some prisoners, pretend to create a collective answer by undertaking a hunger strike, to open a common space of struggle which would overcome atomization and isolation. (...)

For now, we are getting ready for the hunger strike which will take place in Italy next December for life prisoners...

We believe this to be a good occasion in order to give an impulse to anti prison struggles and proposals... (...)

"...At the same time, the comrades of I.v.l. are preparing a specific dossier about the proposals and the very contest of german prison reality...We believe the diffusion of such proposals to be very important for the discussion and the debate on an international level..."

If prisoners are able to show their solidarity, under the conditions they are forced to, then here on the outside we have not many excuses left for not to act.

#### **What does the word solidarity stands for?**

Last year, the only ones who actively support the struggle of life prisoners in Italy, beside their relatives, have been the anarchists.

This year, after the disillusion produced by the scarce attention their struggle found within the public sphere, life prisoners do not rely any longer on empty promises but called for a struggle that looks for the support of all the ones who repute life

sentence an aberration, prison a monster and feel solidarious with them, a struggle to be undertaken by the means, one feels the closest to.

Some people will make a hunger strike as well, as it was last year where several prisoners from other countries solidarized as well: this year there have been already some call to solidarity from Spanish prisoners as well as from other European ones.

Some relatives participated and will participate again, some non-life prisoners, some concerned individuals and more. However, the hunger strike is not to be seen as the only mean one can support this struggle, neither it has been asked for: everything which can raise attention and put pressure on authorities in order to express our unsatisfactoriness with the situation and our active solidarity with this struggle is legitimate and welcomed by prisoners.

We plan to host an info event about the ongoing struggle and a rally in front of the Italian embassy. Check out for these dates and, above all, create your own moment of active solidarity!

As Carmelo Musumeci, imprisoned in Spoleto wrote, "He who refuses to struggle is a useless man indeed as well as being someone who places his future in the hands of those that are worse than himself."

We can only underline such evident truth.

Active solidarity with the struggle of Italian and worldwide prisoners!

Against life sentence, against a life inside a prison society!

#### **ABC Berlin**

*\*Art. 41 bis: Is the article within the Italian legal system that allow the Ministry of Justice to suspend the application of rules and regulations normally valid in prison and to apply a different regime to those prisoners who are accused of participating in organized criminal organizations, terrorist groups or take part in or organize prison revolts.*

**DARK NIGHTS**

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# On Sabotage Considered as One of the Fine Arts



*(On Tuesday the 11th of November 20 people were arrested in Paris, Rouen and Tarnac under suspicion of having sabotaged several train lines on the 8th of November. In a coordinated attack metal rods were jammed against overhead power cables, taking out trains on lines north, east and south of the capital, causing chaos to the French rail network. Five people are still being held and a total of nine people are being charged with criminal association with the aim of terrorism and sabotage, and one of the defendants is charged with being the leader of a terrorist group. Police claim that the group has had contact with people across Europe in countries such as Germany, Greece, Belgium and the UK. The group had been under heavy police surveillance since April after the French police were alerted by the FBI after some members had tried to cross the US border illegally.)*

The following text was written by a number of companions in the context of the arrests last November 11th. It may be distributed freely and widely in any form. In a time of "crisis," when the State is showering the capitalists with billions of dollars, it attempting once more to isolate a few "bad rebels" to better eliminate them all. We won't play this dupes' game.

You'd have to be really blind not to see sabotage as the classical weapon of the exploited. And you'd have to have a pretty short memory to forget that in every social war, many a rebel refuses to wait for everyone to move before expressing his or her anger.

From the riots of November 2005 to the CPE riots of spring 2006, from factory occupations and kidnappings of directors to the numerous acts of sabotage during the railway workers' movement of November 2007, it's clear for a lot of people that we won't have an end to our situation of misery and exploitation by begging for it.

In this prison society, we're expected to believe we're in the best of possible worlds: commodity democracy. And they try to force us to believe it with tazer shocks and ballots. The wars and the poisoning of the planet for money are nonetheless a clear reminder that capitalism is a death-dealing system and that the State is not a friend, but an enemy.

And so we must fight back, to destroy what destroys us. Struggle individually and collectively wherever we are for a world emancipated from the bonds of exploitation and domination. It is not their penal codes and morality that must dictate what we must do, but the rage and ethics of each and every one of us.

On the 11th of November, ten persons were placed under arrest during a new operation by the Ministry of Terror, and accused of sabotaging the tension wires of SNCF trains during the prior weekend. Journalist cops, politicians, and jackals came from all sides to hurriedly denounce an imaginary "anarcho-autonomist" movement. On the same pretext of "association of criminals with terrorist aims," three comrades have already been arrested, and some held for over 9 months, accused of an attempt to burn a police vehicle in Paris in May 2007, during the explosions of anger that arose to greet the last presidential election.

In a time of "crisis," when the State is showering the capitalists with billions of dollars, it attempting once more to isolate a few "bad rebels" to better eliminate them all. But it hardly matters whether they're guilty or innocent; we'll leave those categories to the robe-wearing toads and their sustainers.

Because in the same way as the passion for freedom can't be captured in an acronym, what domination most fears is a diffuse and anonymous replication of these attacks. Solidarity against State terrorism, by all means anyone considers adequate.

Let us derail the train of everyday routine.

**November 12th, 2008.**

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## Terrorism or Tragicomedy?

On the morning of November 11, 150 police officers, most of which belonged to the anti-terrorist brigades, surrounded a village of 350 inhabitants on the Millevaches plateau, before raiding a farm in order to arrest nine young people (who ran the local grocery store and

tried to revive the cultural life of the village). Four days later, these nine people were sent before an anti-terrorist judge and "accused of criminal conspiracy with terrorist intentions." The newspapers reported that the Ministry of the Interior and the Secretary of State "had congratulated local and state police for their diligence." Everything is in order, or so it would appear. But let's try to examine the facts a little more closely and grasp the reasons and the results of this "diligence."

First the reasons: the young people under investigation "were tracked by the police because they belonged to the ultra-left and the anarcho autonomous milieu." As the entourage of the Ministry of the Interior specifies, "their discourse is very radical and they have links with foreign groups." But there is more: certain of the suspects "participate regularly in political demonstrations," for example, "in protests against EDVIG [a database of "potential suspects" held by the French police] and against the intensification of laws restricting immigration." So political activism (this is the only possible meaning of linguistic monstrosities such as "anarcho autonomous milieu"), the active exercise of political freedoms, and the employment of a radical discourse are therefore sufficient reasons to call in the anti-terrorist division of the police (SDAT) and the central intelligence office of the Interior (DCRI). But anyone possessing a minimum of political conscience could not help sharing the concerns of these young people when faced with the degradations of democracy entailed by the EDVIG database, biometrical technologies, and the hardening of immigration laws.

As for the results, one might expect that investigators found weapons, explosives and Molotov cocktails on the farm in Millevaches. Far from it. SDAT officers discovered "documents containing detailed information on railway transportation, including exact arrival and departure times of trains." In plain French: an SNCF train schedule. But they also confiscated "climbing gear." In simple French: a ladder, such as one might find in any country house.

Now let's turn our attention to the suspects and, above all, to the presumed head of this terrorist gang, "a 33 year old leader from a well-off Parisian background, living off an allowance from his parents." This is Julien Coupat, a young philosopher who (with some friends) formerly published *Tiqqun*, a journal whose political analyses – while no doubt debatable – count among the most intelligent of our time. I knew Julien Coupat during that period and, from an intellectual point of view, I continue to hold him in high esteem.

Let's move on and examine the only

concrete fact in this whole story. The suspects' activities are supposedly connected with criminal acts against the SNCF that on November 8 caused delays of certain TGV trains on the Paris-Lille line. The devices in question, if we are to believe the declarations of the police and the SNCF agents themselves, can in no way cause harm to people: they can, in the worst case, hinder communications between trains causing delays. In Italy, trains are often late, but so far no one has dreamed of accusing the national railway of terrorism. It's a case of minor offenses, even if we don't condone them. On November 13, a police report prudently affirmed that there are perhaps "perpetrators among those in custody, but it is not possible to attribute a criminal act to any one of them."

The only possible conclusion to this shadowy affair is that those engaged in activism against the (in any case debatable) ways social and economic problems are managed today are considered ipso facto as potential terrorists, when not even one act can justify this accusation. We must have the courage to say with clarity that today, numerous European countries (in particular France and Italy), have introduced laws and police measures that we would previously have judged barbaric and anti-democratic, and that these are no less extreme than those put into effect in Italy under fascism. One such measure authorizes the detention for ninety-six hours of a group of young – perhaps careless – people, to whom "it is not possible to attribute a criminal act."

Another, equally serious, is the adoption of laws that criminalize association, the formulations of which are left intentionally vague, which allow the classification of political acts as having terrorist "intentions" or "inclinations," acts that up to now were never considered as means to terroristic ends.

Written by *Giorgio Agamben*, an Italian friend of Julien Coupat.

All nine of the defendants are charged with "participation in a criminal organisation with terrorist intent". Four of the defendants have been released and are under judicial control. Five people are now in detention and are additionally charged with "collaborative malicious mischief with terrorist intent". Julien Coupat is charged with "being the leader of a terrorist cell". You can write to them via the solidarity group, money for legal expenses is badly needed.

**Gabrielle, Manon, Yldune, Benjamin, Julien**

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## Solidarity with Greek hunger-strikers

Since the 11th of November more than 5,500 prisoners all over the country of Greece have been on hunger-strike, in protest against the intolerable conditions they have to exist under.

There has been a wave of popular actions in solidarity with the prisoners struggle, from statements read out on an occupied radio station, solidarity-concerts, to street and motorbike demos, of course a lot of night-time sabotage and the legal attempts by the prisoners themselves to have their demands heard and met.

This is the conditions of the prisons everyday, they are never places of this "democratic" "rehabilitation", only of corruption and brutality. In the prisons of Southern Europe there is no respect even for the infamous lie of EU "human rights", to fight for these basic things is difficult. For us, as anarchists, we do not want to make the prisons "better" in some way, but to break down the walls and the prison society that needs them forever, through self-organisation and mutual aid.

The broader incarcerated population of Europe is organising a whole new wave of activity, with an huge rolling Italian hunger-strike starting 1st Dec until March 2009, and also a new German hunger-strike beginning soon as well. The prison always conceals what the society produces, the capitalist system must be dismantled to stop this ceaseless grief that poverty and dehumanisation causes. The question is how we can on the outside help kick the walls in of prison and the nation-state!

Let's act for freedom in complicity against the state and the bosses!



### Some acts of international solidarity

For more info about the actions happening in Greece, check out [directactiongr.blogspot.com](http://directactiongr.blogspot.com)

**12/11:** *Spray painting and vandalism in solidarity actions at the Greek Embassy in London, and Moabit prison memorial (Jail of Berlin) in Germany.*

**13/11:** *Greek economy minister G. Alogoskoufis is pelted with eggs in London during a speech in London School of economics by a group throwing leaflets and chanting slogans in solidarity to prisoners. On his way back to Greece, he was attacked again in the airport by a group in solidarity to prisoners throwing yoghurts at him!*

**14/11:** *Anarchists distribute the following text at the Economy and Commerce Section of the Greek Embassy, in the center of Lisbon. The leaflets included a small introductory text to the ongoing prisoners' struggle in Greece, a few of their demands, and a chronology of the events.*

**Prison is everywhere**, in all our life. Constantly we are watched, controlled, identified, listened... it is the cop, the surveillance camera, the court, the judge, the police station, and our entire reality of forced interactions... it is the fear of being what we are, of saying what we feel, of doing what we would like to do... it is the everyday misery, it stalks us in our memory, it is a permanent threat... Prison is also that isolate building, where only the convicted and the hangmen are... it is the siege from where we can not leave, it is the guards that control and torture us, it is our body in the hands of the state...it is the walls that enclose and hide us, that push us away for years... it is the place where everything is taken away from us... Prison is, at the same time, an idea and a building. But always a reality. In Greece, like everywhere else, the struggle of the prisoners is the only way to face and fight the reality to which they are forced. To accept prison is only possible due to all the means of alienation the state uses, inside and outside the prisons, and that create a daily life of fear and resignation. What's happening today in the Greek prisons has born from the determination of individuals kidnapped by the state, and although we are outside the walls, that doesn't mean we're free. That freedom, we have to conquer it. In Greece, in Portugal, and anywhere else, no condition of life inside a prison will ever be human, because that's impossible inside a prison. There's no reform of whatever nature that can, in any way, humanize this place where we're locked up; where everything, with the exception of dignity, is taken away from us. But dignity will always belong to those who struggle, to the insurgents, to the individuals. There are countless ways with which to show our solidarity and spread the revolt, attacking control and the controllers of this world; the first step is to decide on which side we are. Having said this, the only "demand" we have is the destruction of every prison and of this prison-society!  
**SOLIDARITY WITH THE PRISONERS IN STRUGGLE IN GREECE!**

**16/11:** *Anarchists attacked the Greek embassy in Lisbon (Portugal) with black paint-bombs. "Greetings to the comrades. Solidarity to the prisoners in struggle!"*

**16/11:** *Info and solidarity demo at Brixton oval, London UK and walk to Brixton prison.*

**24/11:** *In the evening the Greek Embassy in London is spray-painted and vandalised again in solidarity with the prisoners on hunger-strike....*