HUNGER STRIKE AS A MEANS OF STRUGGLE

TEAR DOWN THE BASTILLE
VOICES FROM INSIDE THE WALLS

ISSUE 6
APRIL 2016

Solidarity Fund
For Imprisoned And Persecuted Fighters
http://tameio.net/

For Communication:
tameio@espiv.net

Tear Down The Bastille:
Voices From Inside The Walls

Translation note:

This issue of "Tear down the Bastille, voices from inside the walls" was published in Greece in April 2016 and its theme was *hunger strike as a means of struggle*.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE PUBLICATION OF "TEAR DOWN BASTILLE" is in the frames of the functioning of the Solidarity fund for imprisoned and prosecuted fighters and is distributed inside, as well as outside the walls. The main activity of the fund is to contribute to the livelihood needs of the people who are incarcerated for their subversive actions and participation in social struggles. Within its capabilities, lies also the support of people whose constant and persistent attitude within the daily prison life has been identified with dignity, solidarity, and the struggle. However, one of its additional main priorities is the contribution to the spreading of the words of the prisoners and the overcoming of its barriers, posed by their incarceration.

Those of us who take on the publication of this issue are limited to its technical processing and distribution. The texts come exclusively from fighting prisoners -not always only from those who are materially supported by the fund, but also others who decide to stand tall against authority and the devastating condition of incarceration. This present issue is an exception, because it has fulfilled the subjects its called to cover. In this case, besides the letters from imprisoned comrades there is also a historical review which was written by the funds' assembly. Through publishing the thoughts and experiences of prisoners, through the spreading of their words, we seek to make them as present as possible in the daily processes of the fighters outside the walls, we want to shake the barriers of silence, fragmentation, the division among the oppressed, we chose to incarnate the projects of struggle and solidarity in one more way.

This specific issue refers to hunger strike as a means of struggle, a matter that has intensely concerned not only those directly involved but also those in solidarity, as well as a large part of greek society. A hunger strike, as a means of struggle, was never a desperate move, or simply a "peaceful" protest in order to project the victimization of the hunger striker and extract sensitivity and charity. It is a conscious struggle, where the coordination of those inside and outside is a necessary condition in order for there to be a result, but also to maintain the strengths of those fighting. Despite all this, we realize that the hunger strike is the ultimate means that a prisoner could choose, we think it is of imperative need to cultivate a bidirectional struggle dynamic inside and outside the walls, that will prevent the condition of someone placing their own body as a mound.

The struggle for revolution and the tearing down of very prison still remains open.

SUPPORT THE IMPRISONED FIGHTERS, MATERIALLY, ETHICALLY, POLITICALLY.

FROM THE FIRST STAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY, societies were created based on freedom, communal ownership and equality, which however gave way to inequality, injustice and exploitation of human by human, mainly after the appearance of slave ownership, patriarchy, individual property, the state and organized religion, resulting in the development of relations of authority between people and division of social layers into slave owners and slaves, feudal lords and crofters, into capitalists and workers, writing thus the history of all social and class struggles. Although exploitation of human by human is commonly criticized and the value of human rights is theoretically supported by all, in practise these are violated first chance possible. Many people everyday at all corners of the earth, through the concept of human rights, proceed to extreme acts of protest asking for the enforcement of the law of civil society in order to demand the recognition of their dignity.

A very widely used way to protest and claim political, social and individual demands is, among others, a hunger strike, during which the protester refuses to receive food with the aim of demanding everything they consider they are unfairly deprived of, intensely experiencing the social analgesia from those who apply every form of authority on them and having as sole "weapon" their own body. Voluntary abstinence from food is an individual right of everyone and stems from the freedom of the existence of the human. It was always the last tool in the hands of individuals who wanted to spread their ideas and protest the injustices carried out against them. In many cases, it has been characterized as dangerous for the health of the protesting individual, since it is a confrontation during which the danger of death lurks and it's an incremental approach in the defence of life. It is the "spectacle" of a suicide in slow motion and the winner is always the striker, whether with the satisfying of their demands, or with their death.

"Because, in order to be alive, it needs an attempt much larger than the simple fact of breathing"

-Martha Medeiros

Hunger strike is a process, during which the organism is subjected to a severe ordeal that pushes it to the most extreme physical and psychological limits, while its impacts can cause permanent and irreversible damage. From its beginning, the initial symptoms are the feeling of fatigue, fainting and dizziness, while the situation of the striker is considered critical after the first ten days or in case they have lost more than 10% of their bodily weight, causing among other things bradycardia, drop of blood pressure, postural hypertension, abdominal pain and gastrointestinal disorders. From the first days already, the feeling of hunger and thirst is lost, resulting in serious dehydration caused to the body, this is why it is necessary that the strikers should be under medical observation from the beginning. Many times the state mechanisms and prosecutors proceed to oppressive practices which aim at physical and psychological humiliation of the strikers.

And while in the correctional code the term "force feeding" does not exist, however there is an explicit reference o the hunger strike (article 31, paragraph 3), according to which "if the prisoner is not in a state to consent or refuses to consent to a medical act (...), which is deemed necessary for their health, the authorized court official orders the oppressive measures where appropriate". Thus, the prosecutors are called to judge the psychological situation of the striker, in order for them to make decisions that are, obviously, to maintain the prisoner alive with the most suitable means. Despite all that, even if there is an order by the prosecution, the doctors can refuse to carry out such "medical acts", especially without the consent of the patient, except in the case there is "a direct, absolute and urgent need of medical care or in the case of attempted homicide", in accordance to the medical code of ethics. However, there have been times when doctors have sided with authority and proceeded to this violent means of feeding. The enforcement of this specific means is not acceptable, as well as the threat of its enforcement or other psychological pressures against the strikers, since it is equal to torture and can cause irreversible damage to the organism, especially when the health of the strikers is at a critical and crucial point. In any case, the respect of the prisoners' dignity must be secured.

THE APPEARANCE OF HUNGER STRIKE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Hunger strike, as a social phenomenon, appeared for the first time in the years of pre-christanity Ireland and 5th century India, where according to the myth the hunger striker camped outside the house of the person who accused them of an injustice, and refused to receive food and usually lasted only a day. It was directly connected with the concept of hospitality, since it was considered a shame for someone to let someone die of hunger at their door. The first hunger strikes in modern history, record the mass fasting of Americans for their independence, who aimed at urging more of their fellow citizens to participate in the resistance struggle against English dominance, giving thus a political tone to an extremely religious tradition.

In the early 19th century, many struggles are reported of demands and resistance against the social inequalities and injustices, on a global level. Such a struggle was also that of the "Suffragettes" movement in Great Britain, the main demand of which was for women to get the right to vote and to be allowed to participate in social and political activities of that era. At first their protests were limited to simple demonstrations, during which however the authorities reacted violently proceeding even to beatings and imprisonments. Just like in 1909, when British authorities violently oppressed their demonstrations resulting in the arrests of the English suffragettes, and their "refusal to eat", asking the state to recognize their political rights and characterize them as political prisoners. In the fear of these women becoming martyrs and gaining the sympathy of the common opinion, the British government decided to deal with the hunger strikes either with temporary release from prison, or with force feeding, which is believed to have been used for the first time then. The result caused serious damage to the physical, as well as psychological health of the strikers. Since then the suffragette movement spread very fast to the rest of the countries in Europe, as well as the USA and in the end it managed to place the bases for the insuring of the voting right for women.

A few years later and specifically in 1930 in India, Mahatma Gandhi's continuous hunger strikes gained international recognition and contributed, among other things, to the liberation of the country from british dominance as well as the liberation of dozens of Indian/ Hindu revolutionaries who are held hostage in the whole country.

FROM THE I.R.A. FIGHTERS, TO THE "SUICIDES" OF THE R.A.F. REVOLUTIONARIES

The vengeance of the oppressive mechanisms and the fear of each authority in the face of fighters is the beginning for the toughest resistance battles of the hostages of the state. Over time there have been many political prisoners who choose the hunger strike as a means of resistance to the state arbitrariness, in order for them to demand the basic rights, placing their dignity over their own life. And they always win the former, even if they lose the latter.

As a clearly political act, the hunger strike is recorded for the first time in the end of the 19th century, when dozens of Russian political prisoners chose this specific means of struggle, in order to protest the white cells, detention conditions and isolation they suffered in Czarist prisons. The most lengthily, globally, hunger strike is recorded by the fighters-members of the IRA, which began in August 11th 1920, during the war for Ireland's independence from british occupation, where 60 prisoners in total participated, having as a main demand their transfer from the graves of Cork prisons to regular cells, which they succeeded since many were transferred to other prisons and only 12 remained at Cork. The 12 who remained in Cork continued their struggle, until the death of 3 of them (Michael Fitzgerald died on October 17th after 67 days of hunger strike and Joseph Murphy and Terrence McSweeney, who died on October 25th after 76 days), making the serving president of Ireland, Arthur Griffith ask the remaining 9 strikers John Crowley, Peter Crowley, Thomas Donovan, Michael Burke, Michael O'Reilly, Christopher Upton, John Power, Joseph Kenny and Sean Hennessy to end the hunger strike, as they did on November 11th 1920, after 94 days.

Since then, all those who have been convicted in organizations, such as the IRA, were dealt with as political prisoners and had rights that were not applied for the rest, namely they can wear their own clothes, freely get together with their fellow prisoners and not have to participate in the obligatory prison labour. However in 1976, the british government, in order to penalize the acts of the IRA, decided to withdraw these rights. This was the reason the imprisoned fighters began a new round of protests, initially mild, like on September 14th 1976, when Kieran Nugent refused to wear the prison uniform, choosing to cover his naked body only with a blanket and soon the rest of his fellow prisoners followed his example, creating thus the "blanket protest" inside prison. In 1978, the prisoners decided to intensify their protest with their refusal to wash and their use of the walls and hallways of the prison, instead of the toilet. As retaliation, the screws took them outside their cells, beat them and washed them themselves.

In 1980, the situation reached a deadend so the prisoners decided to choose the ultimate means of struggle, with the participation of important members of the IRA, such as Brendan Hughes, Tommy McKearney, Sean McKenna and others. After 53 days and while Sean McKenna was almost dead, Thatcher agreed to capitulate with the strikers, however the text that was put together essentially changed nothing, so Bobby Sands decided to begin the second hunger strike (March 1st 1981) demanding that he and all his fellow fight-

ers and members of the IRA, are recognized as political and not as penal prisoners. A few weeks later, dozens of prisoners followed Sands' example, within a climate of social sensitivity and solidarity to their struggle, since Bobby Sands' heroism managed to gain the sympathy of the people, even those who did not support his political ideology.

Finally, on May 5th 1981 and after 64 days of hunger strike, 27 year old Sands died while fighting for the lifting of the special detention regime of the Irish political prisoners, while by the middle of August came the death of 8 more strikers. Despite all this, the Thatcher government seemed to retreat, which resulted in them ending the strike in October, after the intervention of their families, having gained some of their demands, without however being recognized as political prisoners.

"They will not break me, because my desire for freedom and the freedom of the Irish people is in my heart. They day will come when all of the Irish people will have the desire for freedom. Then things will change".

-Bobby Sands

Another case of political prisoners which received international recognition, is the R.A.F. (Red Army Faction). the german authorities were intensively concerned by the RAF since it managed to cause severe blows to post-war bourgeois conformity, especially in 1972, when their activities escalated in the context of support to the Vietcong struggle. They carried out important attacks with explosive mechanisms against several state targets linked directly to the german involvement in the usa war in Vietnam. From that moment on the german authorities set as their main target the dismantlement of the organization, managing a significant blow in July 1972, when they arrested its four "leading" members: Andrea Baader, Gudrun Enslin, Jan-Carl Raspe and Ulrike Meinhof, as well as dozens of others. Immediately after their arrest, the four revolutionary fighters together with Astrud Proell, another member of RAF, were transferred to the "white cells" of Stammhein prison, in complete isolation and cut off from the outside environment, while the authorities forbade them of all contact even with their lawyers, aiming thus at their physical and psychological extermination.

"I clashed with the ruling class and its laws, used as protectors so it can exploit and manage everything, all of it. Even our own mind, our thoughts, our words, our feelings, our work, the way we like to love or make love. Throughout all our life."

-Ulrike Meinhof

In January 1973, the members of the RAF began their first hunger strike, in which forty political prisoners participated from various different prisons in Germany and lasted 35 days. It is important to note the symbolic participation of seven of the organizations' lawyers in the hunger strike who, dressed in their gowns, camped outside the german supreme court (BGH). Their hunger strike ended without an outcome, since the german judicial and executive authorities, having the support of a large part of the public opinion, were completely intransigent towards their demands, invoking the "safety of possible victims of terrorism". The second hunger strike began in May 1973 by 80 prisoners living under special conditions in various prisons throughout the country. On the fifth day of the hunger strike, the guards submitted Andrea Baader to the torture of forced feeding, while the prison council clearly out of revenge, and in a clearly illegal way, decided to completely deprive him of water, forcing him to end the hunger strike 8 days later. In the middle of June of the same year the rest of the prisoners ended it as well, without gaining any demands, since only two out of the 80 prisoners were transferred to regular cells.

The third and last hunger strike of the RAF members began on September 10th 1974, a few months before the Stammhein trial, during which 49 strikers demanded the abolition of the special treatment of political prisoners and special forms of detention and extermination. The dramatic escalation of the third hunger strike, peaking with the death of Holger Meins after 50 days, resulted in the content of the common opinion concerning the detention conditions in german prisons, provoking strong social reactions and aggressive turmoil towards the german authorities. In the case of Holger Meins, the prison doctors watching him, proceeded to force feed, resulting in serious damages due to the malnutrition and resistance he showed. His death, resulted in the transfer of all prisoners to regular cells in January 1975. A few months later the revolutionaries of RAF (Andrea Baader, Gudrun Enslin, Jan-Carl Raspe and Irmgard Moller) were sentenced to prison for life, which was followed by the "suicides" of the first three inside their cells in Stammhein prison, except for Ulrike Meinhof, who had already "committed suicide" one and a half year earlier (May 9th 1976), also inside Stammhein prison.

THE "GUANTANAMOS" OF BOURGEOIS LEGALITY

THE TORTURE OF FORCE FEEDING IS quite a common phenomenon in many states of the modern and "civilized" world, while in many cases they even vote in fascist legislation that aim at the oppression of the prisoners' struggles and the humiliation of their dignity, as it recently happened in Israel.

Hundreds of prisoners, mainly Palestinians and almost on a daily basis, proceed to hunger strikes for the torturing they suffer in Israeli prisons, as well as the unjust imprisonments, in many cases without there being a trial. There are many cases of fighters who chose this kind of struggle against the autocratic regime of Israel. That of Jordanian Abdullah Barghouti, who has been sentenced to 2.500 years in prison and Ayman Hamdan, who has not been tried, but is held indefinitely by the israeli authorities. These two prisoners had gone over 70 days of hunger strike and their struggle had caused the global indignation and outcry, while in many countries there

were even solidarity movements activated in favour of the strikers demands.

The greatest fear of Benjamin Netanyahu's "democratic" government is mainly the hunger strikes of Palestinian fighters, since in case they end up in death the clashes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem will intensify. In order to avoid such an incident the government promoted, in July 2015, a legislation that will facilitate the prison administrations to forcefully feed, which after a long parliamentary discussion was adopted with 46 votes for to 40 votes against. This specific law is considered a serious violation human rights by many international organizations. Despite the lack of legitimacy of force feeding in prisoners' hunger strikes as well as the objections of the Israeli Medical Association and unions around the world, Israel continues to act with impunity and as if they are above international law. Recently in fact, based on legislation force feeding was enforced on a hunger striker and specifically on Palestinian journalist Mohammed al-Usamah Qeeq, who chose this specific means of struggle on November 25th 2015, in protest of his incarceration. Israeli authorities proceeded to force feeding in early January 2016 in an attempt to crush the legitimate demands of the prisoners, even those who are held under arbitrary administrative detention orders, without a charge or trial. The hunger striker was tied up and connected to two machines and was force fed intravenously, with the excuse that the hunger strike was endangering his life.

One more resounding case where inhumane detention conditions lead to exterminating hunger strikes are the american prisons in Guantanamo, where ever so often many prisoners are pushed to this means of struggle, as an act of protest and assertion of more humane survival conditions. The "people-guards" in these specific hellholes, in order to deal with this phenomenon, tactically proceed to the force feeding of prisoners up to twice a day each, as it happened recently in the case of 46 year old British prisoner Shaker Aamer, who was arrested in 2001 and has been held ever since without being charged.

"I am sorry my brother, the hand cuffs tie my hands and iron surrounds the place where i sleep. I am sorry my brother, that i cannot help the old, the widow or the child. Do not take ones death as a sign of defeat. It is only a shame when you betray your ideas and you cannot defend your beliefs."

-Uthman Abdul Rahim Mohammed, 26 years old, law student, imprisoned in Guantanamo since 2001.

In the hell holes of neighboring Turkey, physical and psychological torturing, as well as the beatings of prisoners are a daily phenomenon and are most times silenced. The turkish government, in 2000 proceeded to the creation of F' type prisons, which are the evolution of the "white cells" in Germany. They are high security prisons, the cells of which are completely isolated and soundproofed, without natural air and light. Prisoners are placed in a state of complete isolation, since it is forbidden for them to have the essentials (radio, tv and books), while even food and toilets are provided within the cell, in order for them not to interact with their fellow prisoners and with cameras watching over them on a 24 hour basis. Every cell has a door that leads to a tiny yard which is surrounded by an 8 meter wall.

In these cells-coffins, because of the complete lack of communication between prisoners, human existence, dignity, trust, solidarity and comradeship is annihilated. The creation of such prisons was the main reason for the hunger strike started by hundreds of Turkish fighters on December 19th 2000 in 20 prisons all over Turkey, and which concluded with the murder of 28 imprisoned fighters. With mutinies, hunger strikes and with demonstrations, fighters inside and outside the prisons reacted to this new correctional system. The political prisoners of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) carried out a total of 7 years hunger strikes to death, protesting the isolation conditions in the high security prisons, during which 122 fighters from inside and outside the walls were murdered by the turkish state.

In the southern hemisphere and specifically the Woomera concentration camp in inland Australia, on January 19th 2002, about 250 Afghani refugees of the 1000 held in total began a hunger strike, while 100 of them had sewn their lips together, protesting the miserable detention conditions and the obstructiveness of the authorities concerning the granting of their residency permits. A few days later, many of the refugees attempted to commit suicide either by swallowing detergents, or by hanging, most of them ending up in the hospital or in isolation. The then minister of Immigration, cynically stated that "those who abandoned Afghanistan now must return and those who are dissatisfied with their detention conditions should go back home". On January 25th of the same year, 35 Afghan political refugees in the Maribyrnong concentration camp in Melbourne began a voluntary food abstention, with the county's indigenous, the Aboriginals, offering them a symbolic "asylum" as a token of solidarity. The then australian prime minister John Howard dismissed any notion of releasing the refugees, claiming that such an act "does not serve national interests, since it will encourage other illegal immigrants to come to this country". On January 27th 2002, the hunger strike expanded to two other concentration camps, in Port Headland and Curtin West Australia, when dozens of refugees refused to receive food and water, creating simultaneously an important social wave of support. After 14 days of hunger strike and in the face of potential deaths, the government started to back down resulting in convincing the prisoners to stop the strike, promising to speed up the procedures for granting political asylum and that prisoners of Woomera will be transferred to another area.

HUNGER STRIKES IN THE HELLHOLES OF GREEK BOURGEOIS "DEMOCRACY"

THE FIRST HUNGER STRIKE ON GREEK territory is recorded during the interwar years, by communist fighters Avra Vlasi, Persa Vlasi and Smaro Kritikou, who while captive in Averof prisons in November 1930, decided to refuse the prison food in order to condemn the terrorism they suffered inside the walls. Their main demand was to be recognized as political prisoners, within a regime of general humiliation of women in the then barbaric, bourgeois society. Since then, this specific means of struggle is, in Greece, a tradition of conscious protest and assertion of demands which concern, mainly, the constitutional rights of prisoners, their legal treatment by the state and their living conditions in detention centers.

Behind every hunger strike hides usually the arbitrariness of every respective authority and tortures, while there are many cases of extreme authoritarianism on daily basis, hurting with new charges not only the prisoners but even the fighters outside the walls. One of most shocking cases is that of Alekos Panagoulis, protagonist of the anti-junta struggle, who was arrested on August 13th 1968, when he unsuccessfully attempted to kill dictator Papadopoulos. From the first day of his arrest he suffered monstrous torturing by the planted tyrannicides, who even deprived him of the essentials. He survived 4,5 years in a special cell-coffin in isolation, while he carried out 25 hunger strikes, in order to assert his rights as a prisoner.

"Hunger strike is a means to resist. You show them that they cannot take everything from you, since you have the courage to renounce it all".

-Alekos Panagoulis

This ultimate means of protest and assertion, is a clearly conscious decision and not an act of desperation. In the post junta years, a characteristic case is that of anarchist Filippas Kiritsis and his wife Sofia Argiriou in 1978, who were arrested after their co-accused Nikos Papadopoulis, said that they had brought him the 8 molotov that were found in a communal basement space of their shared house and were sentenced for that to 9 and 5 years respectively, without the right to appeal. Until their release they carried out many hunger strikes, with Kiritsis, who also suffered the torture of force feeding with a tube, doing 380 days in total and Argiriou doing 150 days in total. There are not few cases of fighters of the anarchist and anti-authoritarian milieu who are loaded with half of the penal code and who carry out exterminating hunger strikes, with many of them coming close to death, in order to protest the detention conditions or even the extension of their imprisonment, just like the case of Giannis Bouketsidis, Spiros Kogiannis and Rosina Bergner in the '80s, protesting their three month detention in isolation cells.

Addressing the hunger strikes began to change after the development of support movements, as well as the publication of the horrors of detention conditions. Its concept reached other dimensions resulting in the establishment of laws that are only limited to the threat of the prisoner's life. In greece, the first time we found ourselves at that limit was with the strike of anarchist fighters Kostas Kalaremas and Christophoros Marinos. The first enforcement of the new Correctional Code, which foresees that "if the prisoner is not in a state to consent or unjustifiably refuses to consent to an act deemed necessary for the health of the prisoner, the authorized judicial officer orders the force feeding", was the case of anarchist fighter Kostas Kalaremas, who was arrested in July 1995 accused of two bank robberies based on the "confession" of a snitch and on October 11th 1995 chose this ultimate means of reaction for 68 days, protesting the extension of his detention. In his case however, there was one more "innovation" in order to force feed him. It was not only the hostile attitude of the doctors who were looking over him, but they also made him witness the inhumane torture of force feeding on the also hunger striker, Egyptian penal criminal Isaac Sehata.

That same year, anarchist revolutionary Christophoros Marinos, having suffered several persecutions because of his political activity, is arrested again charged with implication in a murder-robbery at Nikea General Hospital, after the "confessions" of some of his co-accused and which were later recanted. Within a climate of terror-hysteria he carries out, on November 2nd 1995, the toughest hunger strike ever in greek prisons, falling into a coma 3 times with doctors bringing him back to life in the last minute. A year later, in December 1996, anarchist Spiros Dapergolas, who was arrested and charged with attempted bank robbery, chose this specific means of battle asking for the lifting of his temporary detention, since he had completed the maximum pre-trial detention limit of 18 months, as set by the law. After 74 days, the Appeals Council decided to release him for health reasons with very strict conditions and the extreme, for then, cash bail of 100.000 drachma.

An important incident that has left its traces to this day, was the EU Summit that took place in Thessaloniki on June 21st 2003, where the resistance of the fighting people clashed with state and during which 7 fighters were arrested and persecuted, because they factually opposed the choices of dominance. During their arrest they were severely beaten and suffered severe physical and psychological torture (pulling out of hair, threats of rape etc). Being hostages of the state for 5 months and with unfounded charges, five of the seven arrestees began a hunger strike demanding the lifting of their temporary detention. Thus, Suleiman Dykduk-Castro (September 21st 2003), Carlos Martinez Marin, Simon Chapman and Fernando Peres (October 5th 2003), and Spiros Tsitsas (October 8th 2003), began their own battle against the rotten capitalist system. From the first moment, many solidarity acts, such as gatherings, demonstrations, p.a. system interventions etc, were carried out in, almost, all cities in greece, as well as many other countries abroad with main demand the release of all of those arrested. On November 26th 2003, their struggle was vindicated.

The criminalization of anti-regime political activities, as well as the targeting of fighters who defend revolutionary acts is a frequent phenomenon in the last decade. There are many examples, where the state furiously avenged the dignified stance of fighters, targeted personal relations by imprisoning fighters without evidence, with sole purpose to oppress the morale and break their psychology. Such a case

is that of Aggeliki Sotiropoulou, who was arrested in September 2002 for participation in the revolutionary organization 17November, with only evidence one of her fingerprints. On December 10th 2002 she placed her body on the line protesting the isolation regime and asked for equal terms of imprisonment, yard time and interaction with the other prisoners. As a token of solidarity, on December 19th 2002, D.Koufodinas, G.Serifis, Th.Psaradelis, A. Giotopoulos, V.Tzortzatos and N.Papanastasiou also went on hunger strike. Their struggle was vindicated on January 2nd 2003. a year and a half later and specifically in August 2004, seven political prisoners of the revolutionary organization 17November (Savvas Xiros, Vassilis Xiros, Iraklis Kostaris, Vassilis Tzortzatos, Christodoulos Xiros and Alexandros Giotopoulos), decided to go on hunger strike reaching the limits of human endurance and with their health coming to a breaking point, asking for the lifting of their special conditions of detention and isolation in the special cells. A month later, they stopped the hunger strike having had some of their demands satisfied.

One more example of the vengeance of the state towards those who oppose the state and its oppressive mechanisms, is the case of anarchist comrade Panagiotis Aspiotis in December 2005, who while accused together with anarchists Kalaitzidis and Karasarinis for the case of the stolen riot cop shields, began a hunger and thirst strike, protesting in this way the miserable detention conditions and simultaneously asked to be transferred from Amfissa prisons to Koridallos, as well the release of him and his two co-accused.

After a six year course and with important stops at Prague (Sept. 26Th 2000) against the IMF, Genoa (July 19th-21st 2001) against the G8 and the global anti-war demonstration (February 15th 2003) that took place in more than 70 countries, it was Athens' turn in the frames of the 4th European Social Forum (May 4th-7th 2006) against the forthcoming war in Iran, with the participation of dozens of thousands of protesters. From the gathering already, but also during the demonstration, attacks were carried out against the riot cops that turned into clashes, as well as some specific capitalist and authoritarian targets. During, but also after the end of the clashes there were 40 detentions and 17 of them turned into arrests. Two of the 17 "chosen" arrestees, Tasos Zadorozni and Gerasimos Kiriakopoulos, who while imprisoned for 9 months without any evidence and loaded with half of the penal code, began a hunger strike on November 11th 2006 and December 7th 2006 respectively, demanding their immediate release. After 70 days of food abstention for Zandorozni and 62 days for Kiriakopoulos and while in a very critical and limited situation, were released on bail, until their trial.

"Some think that by choosing hunger strike as a means of struggle for my release i punish myself. However, i believe that i would really be punishing myself if i left the injustice carried out against me to continue. If i remained inactive for one more day inside (...). I have decided to continue, until my captivity ends. All i got is my body. All I am demanding is my release. Everything else was not even imprisoned for a minute."

-Tarasios Zadorozni

The largest hunger strike recorded on greek territory, but also on a european level maybe, was in November 2008, when the successive deaths and suicides even in isolation, the exterminating detention conditions, captivity through excessive use of disciplinary sentences, minimal to non-existent medical care, the crippling sentences, prison overcrowding, the non granting of furloughs and torture were only some of the reasons for the mobilizations that took place in 22 greek prisons. From October 9th, prisoners in all greek correctional galleys had announced that they would begin a lengthy hunger strike, in case the Ministry of Justice did not take action to improve the detention and living conditions. Simultaneously, Amnesty International called for the greek authorities to clean up their act and take all necessary and practical measures according to the international standards, in order to eliminate violations of human rights against the prisoners in greek prisons. While the designated institutions stalled the bureaucratic procedures, on November 3rd about 10.000 male and female prisoners with clearly class elements, began a hunger strike with "Rage and Dreams cannot be imprisoned" as the main slogan. Their demands concerned the improvement of the inhumane and miserable living conditions, the decrease of the average sentence for an early release, the abolishing of disciplinary sentences, the decongestion of prisons, the complete and permanent 24hour medical care and coverage, granting of furloughs without discriminating, the improvement of sanitary facilities, the widening of open visits to humane conditions, the humanization of transfer centres, the implementation of the measure of alternative sentences and the ceasing of abuse in pre-trial detentions. The complete abstention from food and water brought severe health problems to hundreds of prisoners, while more than 60 hunger strikers in Larissa and Patras prisons, were transferred to hospitals, as well as four female prisoners from Thiva prisons who were transferred to the hospital bleeding. On November 20th the hunger strike ended, with most demands having been satisfied.

"I feel like we are banging our heads on the bars. Many heads will break, but eventually so will the bars."

-Nikos Kazantzakis

A month later and after the murder of 15 year old student Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a cop, insurrections broke out all over greece with daily street battles, clashes and demonstrations by outraged people, of all ages, for this new state murder. On December 18th, Thodoris Iliopoulos was arrested with a variety of felony and misdemeanour charges. Those placed in bourgeois justice imprisoned him arbitrarily and without any evidence, since in his face they saw a "dangerous reactionary element" that they intended to use as an example. The theatre of the absurd of the charges continued and Iliopoulos was imprisoned with no margins for reaction. After 8 months of incarceration and after his application for release was denied, Iliopoulos began, on July 9th 2009, a struggle inside the walls with sole weapon his own body. After 49 days of hunger strike and with a large movement of solidarity at his side, he was released on bail and with severe health issues.

The mechanisms of abusive arbitrariness of the "democratic" greek state was shown in the case of anarchist Kostas Sakkas, who was arrested in December 2010 charged with integration and participation in an unknown "terrorist" organization and aggravated weapons possession. Two months before the completion of the pre-trial detention period (18 months) he

was persecuted again resulting in the extension of his detainment by 12 months. After 12 months had passed and despite the completion of the maximum detainment period of 30months, without the trial for the first case having been completed and without the second trial having begun, the Appeals Council decided another 6 month extension, resulting in the comrade beginning a hunger strike on June 4th 2013. The unforeseen, for greek standards, violation of the pre-trial detention limits of an accused without a trial, caused intense social reactions with dozens of support gatherings, demonstrations and interventions in many greek cities. On July 11th the Appeals Council finally decided to release the comrade, after 38 days of hunger strike and while his life was hanging from a thread, with exterminating conditions and a cash bail of 30.000 euros.

The treatment reserved by the state for the captive fighters that aims at their psychological extermination and physical and ethical annihilation, was shown also in the case of anarchists revolutionaries Nikos Maziotis, Kostas Gournas and Polla Roupa who were arrested in April 2010, for integration and participation in the Revolutionary Struggle and who claimed the political responsibility of the organization. The vindictiveness of the state against them was not satisfied only with their imprisonment, but wanting to divide them and exterminate them they forbade Maziotis to see his partner and new born child, for "security" reasons. Thus, on July 15th 2010 anarchists revolutionaries Nikos Maziotis and Kostas Gournas went on hunger strike denouncing the vindictiveness of the authorities, while simultaneously 76 prisoners in various prisons went on food abstention, as a token of support. After 11 days the comrades' demand was accepted, resulting in him being transferred to the hospital where his partner and their child were held. A few months later and specifically on October 10th, comrade Kostas Gournas began a hunger strike in order to receive a written response-approval of the ministry of Justice to his 5month old application to be transferred from Trikala prisons, where he was held, to Koridallos in order to be near where his family lives and so he can fulfill the elementary need of his 22 month old children for the presence -even for just 30 minutes- of both of their parents in their lives. After 24 days of hunger strike his demand was satisfied and he was transferred to Koridallos prisons.

These last few years hundreds of "penal" prisoners, political refugees and immigrants who resort to this extreme means of self-extermination struggle in order to assert basic rights of defence and communication, such as the 300 immigrants-workers, who in January 2011 for 44 days demanded the legitimacy of all immigrant workers in Greece.

In the summer of 2015 we witnessed an unprecedented humanistic crisis. Using as a "cause" the so-called management of the refugee tension, the european states completed and perfected the structuring of "Fortress Europe".

Many islands in the greek territory (Lesvos, Hios, Samos, Kos), received a massive wave of refugees, that went far beyond the existing capabilities for reception and hospitality. From the beginning hundreds of solidarian volunteers from all over the country mobilized spontaneously in order to help them, any way possible. In November 2015 the refugees began a struggle, in order to be allowed to enter Northern Europe. Thousands of refugee prisoners all over the country chose hunger strike as a means of struggle, protesting their incarceration in detention centres, miserable living conditions, the complete lack of medical-pharmaceutical care, the cases of mistreatment and torture etc. Characteristic examples are the hunger strikes in Idomeni on November 21st 2015 when 10 Iranian refugees even sewed their mouths closed, at Corinth detention centre on January 15th 2016 when dozens of refugees wanted to protest the detention conditions, the lack of legal support and interpreters and the lack of heating and clothing, in Amigdaleza on March 28th 2016 where hundreds of immigrants protested the miserable detention conditions as well as the death of a 26 year old Pakistani and in Lesvos on April 1st 2016 when dozens of refugees, trapped in the cogs of bureaucracy, asked for their freedom and the opening of the borders.

One more recent example is the case of Sanaa Taleb, an immigrant from Morocco who was already working in Greece when she got arrested in April 2015 because she had no papers. On October 31st 2015 she began a food abstention together with other immigrants in order to denounce the tragic detention conditions and their illegal detention. On November 5th 2015 she was transferred bondslave to the transfer centre and then the airport, where they tried to deported her. Shanaa resisted and was beaten by the cops, while her deportation was cancelled. She was prosecuted for disobedience and destruction of public property, since they charged her with damages to a cop car. In December and while her 6month detention period was ending, she was convicted for 3 more months because her deportation was still pending. The message of the state is clear. Whoever does not bow the head, is punished as an example. Shanaa again began a two-day hunger strike on December 14th 2015 together with other immigrants in order to denounce her illegal detention and ready to fight for her freedom. Sanaa's struggle comes to strip declarations of the coalition of Syriza-Anel about abolishing the immigrant concentration camps. A coalition that zealously continues the generalized capitalist attack, the emergency measures and the managing of surplus populations, who either die at the borders-cemeteries, or they become a business object among the state-slave traffickers-mafia. Those who are "left over" when not led to galleys of labour exploitation, led to incarceration or some in concentration camps, holding cells-hellholes or deportation.

"If i have to choose between deportation and death, i choose death"

-Shanaa Taleb

The struggle to maintain human dignity from inside the dungeons of greek "democracy" continues to this day. The cases are not few where imprisoned fighters who experience the vindictiveness and arbitrariness of the "justice state". In these cases is included also that of fighter Spiros Stratoulis, who while imprisoned for 22 years, began his own struggle on November 11th 2013, denouncing his new penal persecution from the authorities based on tapped, third party phone conversations, as well as the abolishing of the furloughs he was entitled to. His struggles inside prison, were enough to transform him into an enemy of bourgeois "legality". After 61 days on hunger strike and having already been transferred to Larissa hospital where he dealt with the doctors miserable behaviour, he came really close to death. Only then did the authorities and the Appeals Council decided to exempt him from the unstable indictment, since in no case did they want a dead hunger striker.

One more case where the state persecuted and imprisoned fighting comrades because of their political actions is that of Antonis Staboulos, who was arrested on October 1st 2014 accused among other things for integration and participation in the Revolutionary Struggle. The comrade's arrest is the continuation of the pogrom unleashed by the "anti-terrorist force", after the attack with a car bomb at the Bank of Greece in April 2014 and the eventful arrest of anarchist revolutionary Nikos Maziotis in Monastiraki in July 2014, who claimed political responsibility of the attack. Comrade Staboulos began a

hunger and thirst strike on October 6th 2014, protesting his illegitimate transfer from Koridallos prisons to Larissa prisons, something that complicated his communication with lawyers as well as his family. On October 11th 2014 and when the consequences of abstention from food and liquid began to threaten his life, he decided to end the hunger strike.

Also very strong in the memory of the solidarians, are the recent hunger strikes for educational furloughs entitled to those who passed their exams and got into an education institutions. Iraklis Kostaris, from October 29th 2014 to November 11th 2014, refused food, protesting the enforcement of an unacceptable regime of exclusion and discrimination. Simultaneously, on November 8th 2014 anarchist Nikos Romanos put his body as a mound, in order to assert the "breathes of freedom" he deserved, so he can follow the lessons of his school, on December 10th and having lost a lot of weight and obviously worn out after 31 days, he ended the strike and accepted the parliament's decision for automatic granting of educational furloughs with electronic surveillance (ankle tag). At the same time, anarchists Bouroukos, Michailidis and Politis ended the hunger strike they had begun as a token of solidarity.

The toughest struggle of the political prisoners and imprisoned fighters is the one which began inside the walls and concerned the high security prisons. The state and its mechanisms want to target those who they consider "enemies" and political opponents, or making their detention a modern exile. C'type prisons intend to physically and mentally exterminate political and penal prisoners. This is why, about 4.500 prisoners in all prisons around the country initially reacted with food abstentions and on June 23rd 2014 they culminated their struggle aiming at the withdrawal of this fascist legislation, which in the end was voted through in July 2014. The vindictiveness of the state towards those who put dignity above their own life, continued in January 2015, when the "dangerous terrorists" -anarchist and communist political prisoners- Nikos Maziotis, Kostas Gournas, Dimitris Koufodinas as well as dozens others, were transferred to the high security prisons of Domokos.

The analgesia of the "leftist" government of Syriza towards its pre-election statements concerning C'type prisons, as well as the vengeful imprisonment of the relatives of the CCF resulted in dozens of political prisoners beginning a hunger strike on March 2nd 2015 demanding the abolishing of the "terror-law" (187 and 187A article of the penal code), the abolishing of the "hoodie-law", the abolishing of C'type prisons, the release of severely injured fighter and member of the r.o. 17November Savvas Xiros, who is hostage of the state with 98% disability, as well as the limitation of the use and processing of dna as evidence. These political prisoners participated in the hunger strike: Kostas Gournas, Nikos Maziotis, Tasos Theofilou, Dimitris Koufodinas, Adonis Staboulos, Giorgos Karagiannidis, Giannis Mihailidis, Andreas Bourzoukos, Dimitris Politis, Fivos Harisis, Argiris Dalios, Grigoris Sarafoudis as well as 8 Turkish communist political prisons. Their struggle ended after 48 days, with most hunger strikers having been transferred to hospitals and having won a small victory in this difficult battle.

Simultaneously, after the pogrom of persecutions and imprisonments against the relatives and friends of members of the Conspiracy Cells of Fire, that followed after the arrest of anarchist Aggeliki Spiropoulou, the members of the organization Theofilos Mavropoulos, Giorgos Nikolopoulos, Mihalis Nikolopoulos, Panagiotis Argirou, Damiano Bolano, Haris Hadjimihelakis, Christos Tsakalos, Giorgos Polidoras, Makis Tsakalos, Olga Economidou, as well as Aggeliki Spiropoulou also began a hunger strike, aiming at the release of the relatives, supporting also the demands of the other strikers. The deliberate indifference of the government resulted in all strikers being transferred to hospitals, inside and outside the walls, culminating with the case of Mihalis Nikolopoulos, member of the CCF, who went into cardiac arrest 3 times in 2 days and doctors resuscitating him last minute. Finally, the "first time" lefty government decided to satisfy the demands of the strikers of the CCF, something that remained on paper, as it was proven after that. The release of Athina Tsakalou resulted in her house arrest, while Evi Statiri remained hostage inside the walls and she began her own struggle on September 14th 2015 protesting her unjustified detention. At the same time her companion Gerasimos Tsakalos, member of the CCF, began a simultaneous hunger strike in support and solidarity. After 18 days and while her health was at a crucial point, she was released with exterminating bail terms.

HUNGER STRIKE: FROM A "NECESSARY SOLUTION" TO THE NECESSITY TO FIND A "SOLUTION"

BY KOSTAS GOURNAS

THE DISCUSSION AROUND THE HUNger strike as a means of struggle of political prisoners in prison is, first of all, a welcomed discussion. The truth is that the sharp increase in hunger strikes over the last 5.5 years, inherent of course with the increase of the number of prisoners and their problems, is on its own a phenomenon that requires processing. There were individual cases of transfer demands, transfers to hospitals, demands for release on probation, for studying, as well as about trial conditions, up to the mass hunger strike last spring that raised more central political issues. All of them were carried out in a complex environment which was shaped after 2010 and intersected two cosmogonies. On one side, the breaking out of the global capitalist crisis and the passage into its greek version with its entry under the Troika, memorandum and the state of emergency that became perpetual. On the other, the mass arrests of, mostly, members of armed organizations, as well as people accused of such, as well as many anarchists. This explosive mixture made both sides toughen their positions. The deep state that emerged into a main pillar of managing the oppressive part of the crisis, with the judicial body as a frontispiece, enforced a policy of zero tolerance towards armed struggle and its carriers inside prison, manifested with the special treatment of the new generation of fighters who were radicalized during the December 2008 insurrection. The frequent hunger strikes on the other, came as a response to precisely this oppressive policy that continued now in a state of captivity. The war was raging inside the walls as well, and in there attacks required immediate responds. The hunger strike was an effective means that combined this immediacy with individual decisiveness and pressure through publicity. Things in prison were and still are relatively simple. We are not in the era when revolts were planned over night. We are far from that point. Thus, the solution of a hunger strike is in reality the only solution.

It is not fertile, at least immediately, to discuss the technical specifications of a hunger strike, even though its outcome depends on them to a great degree. The truth is that if someone is part of what the enemy calls terrorism, then it is certain that their health has to be endangered in order to accomplish something. As we all know, the regime is in serious crisis. The question that mainly the recent strikes raised is, can it carry the death of a political prisoner. It is a fact that there has been a shift in the management of the strikes by the state, especially after the one carried out by comrade K.Sakkas. And this because the successful outcome of the struggle with his release had the wide approval of society, maybe to an unexpected degree. The comrades' subsequent fleeing came to close a cycle of comparable mistreats that were the last straw, concerning the revision of an approach around this issue. The case of Romanos -which is a separate chapter and requires a wider analysis-, but also the mass strike of political prisoners highlighted this revised approach, after it became clear that a possible death is something that the state could now probably handle, inside the already daily murderous environment of the memorandum. In this sense, a discussion on this issue cannot take place safely now as a banal discussion with known results. We are now in uncharted territories. Because like the memorandum regime, oppression will also toughen no matter what political spectrum governs. And any comrade who will take such a decision should factor in this "change of the tide". Gradually, we will experience a peculiar correlation of living cost and the cost of the struggle. Both will increase. We should also factor in that we are living in a historical era where the american dogma of non-negotiation with terrorists dominates. A dogma enforced mainly in the repeated kidnappings of citizens in the periphery. The correlation with our situation is certainly distant, but how distant really? How long can the regime be blackmailed, and what kind of message will a passive attitude send to other social groups?

Let's keep in mind this base of discussion. A hunger strike is never anything more than a means of struggle. A means with a prominent position in revolutionary history, a means soaked in blood, a means we should respect, like our dead. It is not a totem, it is not a sacred banner, it is not something only clean hands can touch. It is simply a tool included a strategy and subjugated to it. Thus, a discussion about hunger strikes must be shifted from a discussion about means to one about strategies of struggle. A relevant issue that might help in understanding this argument is the issue of responsibility claims. Responsibility claims are, precisely, a means of struggle. No one becomes a guerrilla so they can get arrested and take the responsibility. That would be outrageous. This means is used as a step to further promote the policy of the organization or group. When such a strategy disappears, then this specific means does not exist as a choice. There is a tendency to "glorify" some means, since they are identified with really heroic strategies by their carriers, and this is understood to a point. However, what should be more understood is that a pistol, a molotov or a hunger strike does not make someone a revolutionary, but the opposite. The fighter who has a conflict strategy defines the means she/he uses.

As a means, a hunger strike can serve many different strategies. Its aim, therefore -besides the easy cases where we are dealing with zero sum games- is not to have a success of the means, but a success of the strategy. So, a strike that does not reach its main aim, is not necessarily successful just because the prisoner did not die. It takes time and patience in order to evaluate if the successful aims counterbalance the damage, not only in a narrow framework of conflict balance, but taking into account peripheral factors such as the effect on the movement and society. A strike that almost ignited an insurrection is not necessarily a defeat just because it did not accomplish its aim. Just like a strike itself, which creates a bad precedent, putting the following one in a disadvantageous position, is certainly not a successful strike. Terms such as "victory" or "defeat" are unsuitable for a "milieu" that has not collectively defined them. It does not mean however that they do not exist.

A hunger strike is a prime means of negotiation. This does not mean its carriers are reformists. It is comical to believe that

anarchists' struggle falls within the limits of the totalitarian war. Even if some use the term "blackmail" in support of a "more revolutionary" dimension they place in the means, this does not change the fact that blackmail is simply a basic tool of negotiation. In the frames, therefore, of a negotiation, clearer strategies have an advantage. This is why individual cases are always better. A strategy, usually of zero sum that either wins or loses. The striker continues and wins or stops and loses. In the cases however, such as the hunger strike last spring that had many individual strategies and a second one that was integrated as a thematic in the first one -but with its own autonomy-, things get complicated. Back then the objective was not only to accomplish individual aims, but also so a first step could be made, in order to form a political subject. Political prisoners. And if the first strike had some successes that at the end of the day can be criticized by anyone, the second was a resounding failure that will undermine any similar attempt for a long time. But this disappointing result was not defined by issues of a technical nature, but by this confusion of strategies that failed to subdue the technical managing of the means and strengthen the solidarity. Thus, the result was unavoidable.

The discussion about the course of a hunger strike as a means should have been a fertile field in order to understand the evolution of the final war, and these underlines can only be seen under this light. The game of responsibilities, a favourite of the Anarchist movement for years, as a field of sharpening contradictions that makes things go ahead in perspective, no longer seems to meet the increasingly complex demands of the modern struggle. The inability to carry out an honest debrief discussion within the spaces of the political prisoners, removes all the credibility from us, to become expert consultants on the means. Thus, with particular frugality, i hope that time, experience and a new education of struggle will be able to form those victorious terms for the struggles of tomorrow.

September 2015

LETTER FROM TASOS THEOFILOU

HUNGER STRIKE IS ONE OF THE VERY few struggle methods that someone can choose while being imprisoned and for sure it's the most critical one.

A lot have been written about hunger strike's importance and about how it should be honored as a means of struggle. In any occasion it is a political decision, but maybe it is also important to document the dimension of personal experience, not so much for the special experience description -something that would also have its value-, but because it is important to inform others what they would come across if they take this decision, in order to do it more effectively.

The decision for a hunger strike is the highlight of an existencial contradiction between life and struggle, between life and its negation, between decision and instinct of survival, between optimism and futility, between brain and stomach, between brain and body. Commonplace or unprecedented contradictions that suffocate while looking for compound and solution, contradictions that take over every body cell and every second of thinking. After all, these are the contradictions that take hold of us even more than hunger, as also belief against doubt, which gains a religious dimension. It is also reality under this hunger prism, the suffocating feeling of weakness and fear for the next day every day. It is the second night when you feel the sorrow being fed from your insides, creating the most eerie feeling you could ever imagine, until it reaches morning and the blood sugar level stabilises in our body and only an echo is left: a permanent but somehow vague feeling of being punished. Urban legend says that the stomach closes supposedly after some days, but weeks after even the look of a rusk can make one's mouth water, coming at the same time to the conclusion that if something dominates tv images, that is food.

It's the urine that smells like hospital, and the feeling of breath that reflects internal rot. Stomach fluids that have nothing better to do and run on their own, destroying it. It's the cold that never goes away as many clothes you wear, sugared water that keeps you standing and makes even the lungs freeze in every sip. Indolent moves in a voluntary disease. It's the skin that gradually becomes crust, the bones that you can feel them and didn't know they exist. It is growing old in a few weeks, agony about how the next day will find you and desperation every friday before the calvary of weekend's dead time.

It's the false feeling that you deserve to be justified for only the suffering you go through, and the special feeling that the suffering is your choice and the contradiction between life and struggle which clash while they shouldn't.

It is that you can't chop the day in a way that, for ages now, it is chopped, and the simultaneous body weakness that deprives the capability for any activity. Condemned to inaction, one cigarette follows the other, because it is the only thing that can count time, can earth it, can push the day... Smoke is the only thing that can fill up this unprecedented emptiness.

It's the afternoons that you admire the human strength, the clarity, the ability the think clearly and discuss like nothing is wrong and the nights that you think you may not wake up the next morning.

Finally, it's the shouts and chants of comrades gathered outside prison that reach your ears and literally sate your appetite. But it is also the bitter taste that prevails when low level petty politics win after all, and the mournful conclusion about how easy a great struggle can turn into a miserable game of hegemony.

December 2015

STRUGGLES INSIDE PRISON: THOUGHTS ON HUNGER STRIKE BY ANTONIS STAMPOULOS

FROM THE MOMENT YOU ENTER THE prison gate, some time passes until you realise that your freedom has got unexpectely limited. Especially if you are a person who is fighting for it, it's even harder to accept that inside this controlled prison environment you can't win anything without risking a lot. As a prisoner, since you have a lot less fighting options for a glimpse of freedom, you have to 'pay' a high price. Like outside, in the same way inside, power emanates from community, and like outside, the working class cannot be presumed as such without conscience of its position, thus, inside prison without conscience you cannot construct a community. Common interests alone are not enough. Taking as granted the social calmness, it becomes understandable why struggles in prison have a high risk, especially when they are lifted by a few people only. For that matter, when the price gets split on more people, it's manageable, while when it's split on only a few, the price is unbearable. In prison, individual reactions, as a result of the lack of collective recourse, are the ones that dominate. For example, the act of Ilia Kareli, but also of a lot of other prisoners that reach their limits, is counted as a top act of individual resistance. The weight of the consequences of the act, the killing of a prison guard in this case, is equivalent (torture and death) with what the prison guards did back to Ilia Kareli. However, the gain, as to say the punishment that works as an example for prison guards in order to show more respect towards prisoners and also as a point out of the total unfairness of the penal system, is for all prisoners. Equivalently, the great force of organised collective struggles can be understood, especially when they are 'in line' with the ones outside the walls. Besides, conditions in prison didn't change on their own to the better. Prisoners chose to not live 'like animals' and succeeded at that, till today, at a great level. The amount of blood lost for reaching this, was always big.

The options for struggle as a prisoner are very limited, with the main ones being counted on two fingers. An insurrection is something that always the state tries to avoid. However, as strong as an insurrection can be, at the same time it is very difficult to organise it since it requires a critical mass in order for it to be succesful. Hunger strike is the other daring choice. While it exposes the real face of the state, at the same time it brings together conscious social groups and people who in any other occasion wouldn't support so warmly. As a means of struggle, hunger strike is the basic weapon in our quiver, which at the same time is the most critical one since it has the element of self-destruction and leads to permanent damage or death. This is the fact that each fighter has to take in consideration in order to be ready to reach his/her demand or reach death. In the longtime hunger strike in Turkey, which lasted from 2000 till 2007 against F type prisons, 122 fighters lost their lives while 800 where left with some kind of disability. The road for this struggle tool to continue being significant has been kept open from the hundreds of dead hunger strikers around the world. From those who pulled the fight till the end. This is the first thing you have to consider when you are taking such a decision. That the road you are stepping on was opened with corpses and you have to stay worthy of it, holding the weight of your choice whatever it is. This is main reason why the decision for hunger strike has to be well studied and the struggle to be well coordinated with the solidarians, inside and outside the walls. In other words, when we win in hunger strikes, we owe it to the dead and handicapped that walked the road till the end. The consistent position of a hunger striker is not only a moral issue of respect, but also cleanly strategically in order for the method to not lose its meaning. In such a struggle, facts have to be calculated. From one side the determination of the striker and of the people that will support him personally and politically, and on the other side the political cost and capability for maneuvers from the side of the state.

From the recent strikes that almost all of us political prisoners did in Greece on March 3 2015, a lot of conclusions can come out. For that matter, they have been thoroughly detailed by DAK (Network of Fighting prisoners) in the review of the struggle, and i think that a reference at that text is worthy for anyone who wants to have a close look on the events. However, i would like to mention the victories we achieved on tactical level, since many times, because of politically unjustified but morally remarkable modesty, we don't point them out as much as we should.

After the hunger strike, covering your natural characteristics in a demonstration isn't a felony anymore. If that wasn't achieved then, today we would have tens of persecuted and condemned comrades. After an arrest, it's not so easy for the cops to obtain DNA with violence, something that (until now) puts an embankment in an early stage of torture, and persecution charge later. If we didn't achieve that, the authorities would have taken DNA samples from recently arrested comrades and sympathizers, persecuting them, given that greek police uses and compares DNA mixture in an unscientific way. At the same time, the release of relatives of comrades charged with anti-terror laws, after the succesful hunger strike done by CCF mainly (which started at the same time with the one of the other prisoners, but was identified with it in many points, since in those persecutions, political connection and common enemy were recognised), was a great victory. Finally, the fact that anti-terror law (187A) and the need for its abolishment were put on political agenda, like the unauthorised use of DNA as evidence, actuated them as prominent issues for comrades and collectives. The fact that C' type prisons were abolished, without second thoughts, from the newly voted coalition government (Syriza - An.el), which showed at what level it kept its promises before and after elections, closed a basic road towards the extermination of all political prisoners, but of social prisoners as well. The fact that the option of release was given, for guerilla fighter of 17N Savvas Xiros, even if it had problems, eventhough the whole upper class was hostile, eventhough he didn't accept it according to his respectful philosophy, was also a victory.

All the above are direct "material profit" of this battle, which, eventhough the target of most was more ambitious, remain very important. This struggle pointed out a lot more, including negative stuff like deficiancies, mistakes, even childish behaviours from parts of the directly involved. From my side, i would like to point out the importance which a basic factor that defines our political desicions has, which especially within the anarchist milleu hasn't bothered us many times, and

is related negatively with the above-mentioned. This concerns the importance we put on our commons (what unites us) or in our differences (what divides us). This choice defines our whole course and was very decisive in the hunger strike as well. In the first case, process and common arrangement feed solidarity and cooperation, and in the second case, political (or personal) "purity" is secured, with discord and dispute finding a fertile ground. The choice between these two roads is a political decision which is critical.

In the revolutionary milleu, critical thought and cooperation have to prevail, not as a tradition or a fetish, but as tools that secure our political existence as anarchists. Just like our choice of horizontal anti-hierarchical organisation against authoritarian centralised organisation is our tool, in order to secure our anarchist direction, by depriving the "institutionalised" power accumulation in the hands of a minority. If something can reassure our route, that is the path, the structure, the rules (always malleable and under critical analysis) within which we form our political behavior and not the opposite, since even if a person is more experienced and respectable, still he/she is not perfect and infallible. In the context that horizontal procedures define, our political choices have to be made according to our common aims and common route, and not according to our differences and isolation. For that matter, if only we could see what is pointed out from the one that wants the breakup, we can easily end up in the above-mentioned conclusion. Divide et impera (divide and rule) they use to say from the old times and that's exactly it. However, the breakup in as many possible parts, is what we want for our class enemy and not for us.

December 2015

LETTER FROM GIANNIS NAXAKIS

TO BEGIN TALKING ABOUT HUNGER strikes, first of all I must find the reasons that gave birth to such a method as a means of protest/pressure in order to understand it better and, by extension, interpret it in the present. Only following this, can my views on it be understood.

Going, therefore, back in time, I can offhand imagine a situation in which a person (or persons) wouldn't have any other option for expressing his/hers rage against the oppression he/she experienced because all other means would have been ruled out, one way or another, and, thus, he/she would proceed to such a move. I can imagine a person that had used up all the active means at his/her disposal, until it was practically impossible for him/her to make any other move besides refusing food. Obviously, this person would be in a condition of confinement or restriction since he/she didn't simply leave the oppression zone. In fact, I imagine that this first person didn't even have the capacity of free physical movement, maybe due to having been beaten or restrained, and then he/she came up with this ultimate way of reaction in a passive self-destructive way, betting on the blackmail of the oppressors. I cannot estimate if this blackmail was emotional or outright practical, since I don't know which era I'm referring to but I lean towards the latter. I'm almost certain that the first one to try this ended up dead. I presume that such a death at some point didn't fit the oppressors any more, I assume for practical reasons (maybe they wanted to use that person for labour/slavery), which fits with the logic of a much older period in time. This discontent of the then ruling power probably got widely known and spread as the incident that marked the beginning of the sporadic reproduction of the hunger strike phenomenon. On top of this, with the gradual democratisation of certain societies, such a death was no longer convenient, not any more for practical reasons (for which they would have probably taken measures by then), but for humanitarian reasons, putting at stake even the core of the regime's rhetoric, namely democracy, and therefore the position of its officials.

Along with the premature democracy and its "rights", the issue of the enemy's rights slowly emerged. This is a logical contradiction emerging when a system of power and therefore of inequalities, establishes its position on theories of equality.

So, getting to today, in the condition of the greek territory in recent years, I can discern at least a degeneration in relation to the "ultimacy" that gave birth to this passive means. Of course, the very meaning of "ultimate" can vary substantially, as is normal, within the context of subjectivity. Therefore, the "ultimate" solution can be deemed as such by people who are not experiencing the exact same situation. But in order to proceed, we have to move beyond subjectivity and identify the condition which we can talk about. Let's stay on the condition of imprisonment because the condition outside the prison allows for many other means of reaction, leading at least the anarchist milieu not to choose this means outside the prison.

It's clear that the frequency with which prisoners choose to go on hunger strike has increased, especially prisoners related to the revolutionary milieu in the greek territory and not only. Simultaneously, the phenomenon of the symbolic hunger strike is also on the rise, as well as the more pressing means of the thirst strike. I am not going to talk about the symbolic hunger strike (with a pre-determined end date) nor about abstaining from prison food, (which has nothing to do with its initial form since for many years now prisoners can be supplied with food from other sources besides the meals that are distributed by the prison). I believe that their symbolism degrades the actual content and substance of a hunger strike in which one pawns his/her own life until his/her aim is met. But even in symbolic cases, as we have seen, some pressure can be put if these gain publicity. What impresses me though is the ease with which such a serious decision is made in recent years, as I am sure that this is related to the fact that, talking about Greece, there is no recorded death from hunger strike, at least none that we know of. Thus, on the other side, it is easy to understand that the state acquires a tolerance towards such situations. Certainly, the state's tolerance is directly related to the dynamics of the social resistance stirred by a hunger strike and which is taken into account and is "priced" politically by the government-in-office. The dynamics of social resistance depend on how "democratic", "rational" and "realistic" is the demand or demands set by the striker. It is also a fact that the development of a hunger strike is influenced by the pre-existing publicity of the striker or of the case in which he/she is involved, and by the wider social automations created, which are uncontrollable most of the time, as we saw in the case of Romanos. Another factor of influence are the public interventions by parents and lawyers (pleas towards the ruling power most of the time), an ugly one I would say, because the reason of their intervention is clearly ethical, emotional or professional. What makes this situation ugly is the fact that these interventions can be prevented from the beginning.

My own personal mark now. I don't

know whether the conceptual gap that separates me from the issue surrounding the hunger strike is clear. First of all, a hunger strike demands something from the enemy; this is a rationale that I am continuously trying to deconstruct, viewing it as something that reinforces the enemy confirming and reproducing its power. Furthermore, concerning the instances when this means has been used, cases that I have seen in person so far in prison, I cannot say that I view them as "last resort" solutions since there are many other actions that can be taken inside here. Of course, the ones I'm thinking of come with potential legal and disciplinary consequences, something however that you overlook when you have –in theory- reached your limits. However, because we are complex mechanisms and because subjectivity holds a special place in our life -especially when we find ourselves in difficult situations-, I don't know how I would react if I were to reach a truly ultimate point according to my own subjectivity. Besides everything, political blackmail in general, and through a hunger strike in particular, weighs heavily on my conscience since it is mediated by society's humanitarian instincts which are included in the hateful, for my perception, context of democracy. Society (as a structure) and democracy are the derivatives of the permanent crime against the animal and natural world called civilisation.

But if we are something, we are above all our contradictions. To some it may seem non-strategic to talk about our weaknesses, but there is something liberating in such a move. I don't hesitate to say that the path of negations turned out to be a lot more lonesome than I expected. There are no co-travellers and I did not even find individuals that share the same aggressive intentions against the situations that are choking us. 'Common worlds' though certainly remain a constant quest. Inside here, in the world of the most evident reversed concepts, from time to time smaller or bigger mobilisations take place which, as a -prison- rule, must always include symbolic acts like the ones I have described above; in some of these I have even participated although they don't "suit" me. I've been on hunger strike once (summer of '14 against the C' type prisons) for 8 days during the mass hunger strike of prisoners, and my impression on all that was quite awful while I didn't feel I was fighting at all. Certainly, such an act like is not of my liking and I obviously prefer other, more dynamic, means. From there on, whoever claims that he/she hasn't lost even a little bit of their dignity inside the prison is simply a liar. What matters is that at least this lost dignity doesn't find a place in negativity towards the confrontational attitude against the prison authority or in the authoritarian rationales and attitudes of many groups of prisoners that suppress the unmediated and spontaneous combative antiauthoritarian attitude of others.

Closing, I would say that hunger strike for me holds a position in this world, the position of necessity in which it was born.

Freedom to all of us

September 2015

LETTER FROM GIORGOS KARAGIANNIDIS

HUNGER STRIKE HIDES IMPORTANCE. Importance that results from a combination of body weakening and debilitation of the strikers, and from the actions/reactions that are created. These two factors usually (but not necessarily always) are connected in relation.

The sharpness that is hidden in the act of hunger strike creates sections within our milleau and also within the handlers of state authority. Main target of every strike is the creation of flows in the social ground. Till now in Greece, the handling of hunger strikes from the state is relatively "painless" (compared with examples that have written the history of hunger strikes). Strikers have reached real critical limits rarely, even if this of course is not any kind of quarantee for the process of future strikes. This prevention of extreme situations is not because of some moral features of institutional officials. Morality is not an independent condition, it is determined from the power corellations inside the field of war we are conducting. If the concept of political cost didn't exist, no state -and the greek one- would have any concern about leaving the strikers to die. The political cost also is balanced in relation with the result of a partial complaisance to the strikers demands.

Also, rarely, especially in the last years following the big wave of arrests of anarchists, demands of a hunger strike have been accepted in total. This shows that in the conflict that is signaled by a hunger strike, demanded from both sides is balance, forceful but at the same time fragile. The fragility of this balance depends on the level of competition that developes every time, that is organisation, determination and perseverance that each side shows in order to defend their position. A lot can be said about the way the state (talking specifically about Greece), regardless of who is managing power each time, faces hunger strikes and mostly the ones that feature political characteristics, leading to political conflict and social turnmoil. I believe though that something like that would lead me to ramble and at the end i would tire, since in all hunger strikes, during their process and also (and mainly) after their end, this topic has been sufficiently discussed. What i see most important in the matter is a calm look on the ways that we perceive, signal and analyse hunger strikes. A look in our weaknesses which are seen more clearly after a hunger strike because of the polarity that preceded. Like any action of ours, hunger strike has as well a twofold nature. It does not only answer to chronic or arising questions but it simultaneously actuates questions about who we are, in what terms we organise, how do we fight, what relationships we create occasioned by a period of intensified conflict with the state. And each one of them and all other that emerge, do not have only one answer, since each individual or collective subject assumes in different ways.

Every hunger strike starts with a decision that has a deep existencial dimension. The continouous struggle that happens between body and brain, between will for resistance and survival instincts is a very special condition which wears down the striker, not only physically, but spiritually/emotianally as well. Our organism, as an undivided set, is influenced as a whole by the procedure of the strike. The possibility of death is something that each person which is commited to the revolutionary prospect has always in front of him/her. Hunger strike though, has the peculiarity that death doesn't seem as a detached, random or unpredictible moment, but an

ending of a predetermined course, with increased possibilities actually, as the days pass. The means has also one more peculiarity. On its own it cannot affect the regime in any way.

Even if it sounds heretic, i believe that hunger strike is an introvert, self-destructive and reformistic means of struggle, regardless from the combatitiviness and determination with which it is carried out, even if it reaches the death of the striker/strikers. The reformistic nature of hunger strike first of all emanates from the beginning of it since it aims to strengthen our position in a negotiation, by blackmailing the state agents. And from the moment we are talking about negotiation, it is expected that there will be agreements, compromises and even reductions from our original declarations. From the moment that we are addressing -even by blackmailing- state agents asking for fullfiment of some demands, we recognise the institutionalised authority and their power to provide some solution. Furthermore, every strike seeks the fullfilment of some demands within the given context, without it being able to destroy or at least overcome the a priori existing power relationships. Basically it promotes a balance in which we (depending on the progress) can win some space related with public addressing, but we realize at the same time the state's capability to compress and decompress a situation, or, in other words, the power to force it has in our individual or collective living.

The substancial peculiarity of a hunger strike though, the one that transforms the rest of its characteristics and is its driving force, is the way it puts the striker from the weak position to the strong one. The determination (or the desperation, depending on the point of view) and the self-denial that the decision to hunger strike hides, puts in a activity orbital people with very different perceptions with the striker, creating social movement. The lyrical - symbolic image that the hunger striker gains as a human who is voluntarily confronting death in order to fight back the "injustice" of totalitarianism, is the subcutaneous (or also apparent many times) starting point for supporting a hunger strike. Depending on references and perceptions, this support can turn on, besides solidarity, humanitarianism, justicial balance, poitical calculation, emotional sympathy, as the most usual from a range of them. And here is where a contradiction is presented which we experience as anarchist "milleu" related with hunger strikes. While each support that doesn't begin from anarchist value solidarity makes us feel disgust, the social pressure they cause is not only desirable, but also necessary for achieving tactical aims/demands of a hunger strike.

The most characteristic example are the hunger strikes by RAF members, which against a very tough and consolitated political system, mobilized gradually (mainly after the death of H.Meins) besides than leftist organisations of various references, some vicars of catholic church, increasing thus by far their dynamics, leading the german state to small consessions. The support of hunger strikes from various sides is an independent procedure from the striker's/strikers' will and has to do with the social reflexes that develop. Always though, the question emerges about how the hunger strike proposals will transform to ruptural and confrontational ones, outflanking assimilative approaches. The thing that denatures a hunger strike from a self-destructive course to a sharp choice of struggle (and sometimes to a substancial conflict) is the meaning of solidarity, the requirement of every struggle.

Hunger strike is a means of struggle which more clearly than any other shows the necessity of expansion and diffusion. Solidarity connects the strikers with other people that feel part of the same struggle, who transmit their voice, who create a common front, who with their actions create cracks in the management of the strike by the state agents. Solidarity liberates and diffuses proposals, ideas, creates movement, the essential substance of life. This is the main issue of a hunger strike (and of every struggle in general) and from this it's succes is counted. If the meaning of solidarity doesn't exist, the militant support of a hunger strike as a moment of sharpening the conflict with state power further and outside of the existing institutionalised context, finally its termination will end up for a wide range of people as acceptance of institution agents' authority to safeguard "human rights" or "democratic values" as our "victory" in the good occassion or "defeat" in the worst. Thus, instead of undermining the nature and the role of state, it will strengthen. And this is a condition that, besides of direct results, makes difficult the beginning of the next strike. Without the militant solidarity, the perception that overcomes the demands or sometimes even the strikers, transforms the hunger strike from demand assertation into struggle for life, the strike ends up a self-destructive option, a "special way of commiting suicide" according to Thatcher's quote on IRA strikers.

Anarchist hunger strikers are not martyrs or eremites that are tortured now in order to gain later a place in some "revolutionary list of martyrs". Nor they are potential suicide victims. Revolutionary history is full of examples of strikers which their death turned them into "martyrs". Every movement/organisation of national liberation (ETA, IRA, Palestinian organisations etc.) or class liberation orientation (RAF, DHKP-C, GRAPO etc.), violent (like the above mentioned) or peaceful (Gandhi movement, African National Congress etc) has its own list of martyrs that died during very tough strikes. As much as it affects us emotionally, the approach that seeks death, dissociates us from the essence of a hunger strike. From the way our choices create movement, namely life, while our choices touch death at the same time. The ways that reality gets disrupted by actions caused from a hunger strike is a procedure to live history in present time and not in the past or in the future.

The core of anarchist overcoming of the archetypical image of the striker is found in overcoming his/her act, his/her choice of hunger strike through other acts that are supplied and connected with the strike but also between them. In this sense, not the striker but the strike is not found only in the prison cell or the hospital ward but mainly in the occupations, the demonstrations, the clashes, the arsons and anywhere else where solidarity is spread. If the strike will succes and in what degree it will meet the claimed demands is one requirement, but bigger one is the roads that opened for the creation and expansion of relationships through solidarity. Of course every struggle works in the opposite way as well, breaking ties and destroying relations, so from the start there is no certainty if a strike or any other form of struggle will move things forward or undermine them in relation with our position. Only the attempt and the act in real conditions can give the answer and this is something that is showed not that much during the struggle but after time following it's termination. In the long run, we can view more roundly the results of a hunger strike. Celebrations or grief cries about "victory or defear" equivalently, after the termination of a strike, reveal the lack of depth with which we value stuff as anarchist millieu, persisting more on the spectacular reflection of things and less on the bases we put for giving our next battle.

Anarchism is an ongoing try for the destruction of state, capitalism and authoritarian relations. As anarchists therefore, this is the only thing we can define as victory. A route in which we cannot put beginning, middle and end. Or letting Malatesta to speak "to anarchy we will never reach, not today, nor tommorow nor ever. We can only head towards it". We need to realise that the dipoles obscure and never unveil. With the calmness and the security that elapsed time gives, we can have a

look at the most recent (and typical) examples of hunger strikes that we experienced as anarchist millieu. The weakness of the analysis based on the dipole "victory/defeat" to completely value the situation is indicative.

Costas Sakkas forced the state to retreat and won his way out of prison, breaking the fascist measure of indefinite detaintment which was going to be put on some of the accused. The hunger strike of Costas created a very strong solidarity movement. A few months after his release, repressive pressure had become so stifling that Costas had to go underground, a special condition that removes him from his social/political environment and the interaction created by this relation. Another example is the hunger strike of Spiros Stratoulis who claimed the cessation of the prosecution that deprived him of the right for leaves' days during his 21st year of imprisonment. Spiros won not only this but also the shift of charges to misdemeanours for the vast majority of the accused. He won, therefore, more than he was actually claiming at the beginning, giving at the same moment a political struggle for overthrowing the anti-"terror" law from the "Thessaloniki stekia" case. The hunger strike of Nikos Romanos was the one that made the biggest impression the last years. Nikos won something that was not provided by the law till then, the allowance for leaves' days for educational reasons to pre-trial imprisoned ones. However, till the time this text is written, he hasn't be given yet leaves' days, because of the subjectivity criteria that got activated on this occasion as well, eventhough the 'gps bracelet' was presented as solomonic solution. The recent hunger strike of Conspiracy cells of fire, theoretically led to release of their close relatives, but actually a second hunger strike was needed for the same reason and strict conditions were imposed on the realesed relatives. At last, the limitation of the arbitrary and violent taking of DNA that was won on papers after the hunger strike of the political prisoners of DAK (Network of fighting prisoners), was practically violated by prosecution provisions. All the above show the vague limits between 'victory' and 'defeat'.

Absoluteness may be very useful in our slogans and our declarations but is proved totally useless when it is about defining our position in the depth of time. The only substancial condition that we can see as "victorious" in a hunger strike is to manage to overcome its context, its demands, its personal objections and qualms, and after all the subjects of it, the strikers, and capitalise the dynamics that develop in the next battles (not necessarily strikes). The experience of battle, the conclusions of self-criticism, the heritage left by the struggle is our victory. Respectively, "defeat" is defined from the level of failure to actuate the above.

In a complex and evolving reality which is composed of outbreaks and remissions of intensity in the clash we are conducting in various ways against the alienation of state and capital sovereignity in all fields of our existance (moral, spiritual, biological, economic, political), the usage of military terminology about 'victories' or and 'defeats', not only disorients us, but hides hastily the essence of our struggle. That it's not a chain with rings in line or a wall where bricks are placed uniformly, but a mosaic where each tile is in interaction with all the others in order to produce a such complex result as the reality that surrounds us. Each tile in this mosaic, each place and moment in spacetime continuum, each individual struggle we give hides something from the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of the past, from the strength and the weaknesses of older struggles, while it simultaneously ingrains the present and future with its own individual characteristics, and hides inside the relationships it creates, the sperm of overcome, not only of the past, but of itself. Only under this prism we can connect our struggles, justifying the over time value of Iracletus who said that 'everything is one'. And under this prism we can perceive that seeing different views and perceptions as a reason for infertile and ruptural disagreement with a hunger strike (or anything else) being the occasion, weakens us in total.

Recognising that despite the possible disagreements about timing, way, organisation and other components that complete an action, it is against the hostile conditions that surround us, at some level it can liberate us politically and strengthen us collectively in order to be more insightful, meaningful and dangerous in the struggles we give.

These are our victories and their absense is our defeat.

December 2015

EXCERPT FROM FERHAT ERTURK'S SPEECH AT K-VOX SQUAT, AT AN INFO NIGHT THAT TOOK PLACE ON JULY 5TH 2013 CONCERNING THE EVENTS IN TURKEY AND THE KIDNAPPINGS OF FIGHTERS

IN 1998 I WAS A PRISONER'S RELATIVE, since my sister was a political prisoner. Because she was in prison, in order to support political prisoners, i participated in the struggle and therefore got imprisoned myself. During my arrest, i was 17 then, i got tortured by police very hard.

Before my participation in the struggle for political prisoners, i was highly influenced by the 1996 hunger strikes in all turkish prisons, where 12 political prisoners lost their lives during it. These images, which have stayed in my mind, have supported me in the revolutionary struggle and were a reason for my participation in it. Then, i met for first time the prisons of Turkey. I got imprisoned for the first time.

In Turkey, we call political prisoners Free Captives. That's how we call them. And that's how people learned about political prisoners and their history. Until i got imprisoned, i didn't know why the state wanted to make white cells. It was an honor for me to between Free Captives. It was an honor for me to be between political prisoners. There, inside prison, i got reborn.

The story of Free Captives starts in 1984. Some time after the junta, they wanted to force prison uniforms. During the hunger strike till death, 4 comrades fell heroicly. From then, the state always attacks prisons, trying in this inhumane way to submit the political prisoners. We didn't make a step back, we didn't lower our head. Because of this resistance of political prisoners in 1996, the opening of white cells was suspended in the city of Eskisehir, which happened though in 2000 after orders by europe.

In prisons, struggles were continouous, without a break. The state, in order to silence us, launched severe attacks, without though the expected success. On the contrary, any prisoner that got released, continued the struggle even more forcefully outside. Because this struggle was kind of psychological struggle between the fighters and the state, it's aim was, with these attacks, to submit the prisoners. Furthermore, their basic aim was to send a message to the people outside, that the fighters inside prison were defeated.

From the 80s till 2000, attacks on prisons were continouous. In 1995 at Diyarbakir prison, 10 people died after extreme torture and also in Butza prison in Ismir, 3 people died. Before 2000, in september '99, the army attacked the central prison of Ankara with various weapons. Prisoners were severely tortured. Others were burned with chemicals and others slaughtered with saws, at total 10 people. There were also many wounded. This massacre was a message towards all political prisoners and aimed at ending the resistance against power and creation of white cells.

From there on, step by step, the attack was continued and the Press was doing propaganda that the prisons were awful etc. and the isolation of prisoners was proposed as a solution, as to say, F type prisons. At the time, when i was a prisoner too, i was informed about the torture going on in other prisons. From the beginning of the resistance, the families of political prisoners were on our side, lauching a support and solidarity campaign with various events all around the country.

In this campaign, artists, teachers etc. also participated. There was big support from a lot of people.

At the same time, as political prisoners we were discussing between us the political situation and the form of our struggle inside prison, but also about how ready each of one of us was for a tough longtime struggle. There wasn't a topic we didn't discuss. Those discussions then, were like a lesson for us. It was preparation against the attack we were waiting from the state. We considered what we had in our hands and how we can use it as a weapon. At the prison i was at the time, prison Umraniye, we were 400 people. More than 100 people were ready to start hunger strike till death. So in October 2011 we started a hunger strike. We continued our every day life with discussions and experience exchanging, knowing though the state's aim and what will follow.

As political prisoners of DHKP-C, we started this resistance. We made a callout to all political organisations to show support to the hunger strike, in order to send a collective message to the state. In this hunger strike, another 2 organisations participated, so we were 3 organisations all together. Most of the political organisations suggested that the hunger strike should start after the transfer of prisoners to the white cells. After 45 days of hunger strike, we changed it to hunger strike till death. In Umraniye prison where i was, 15 people went on strike in the beginning. In every prison the number was different. When the first team started the strike till death, the rest stopped for 10 days. After the break, the second team, which also included me, started as well hunger strike till death. When we reached the 60th day, on the 19th of December 2000, attacks were ordered against 20 prisons. The state anounced that this operation is taking place in order to save the hunger strikers.

In the prison i was, the attack went on for 4 days. It started around 4am.

We woke up from the bullets and the bombs. Our comrades put us, the hunger strikers, in a safer place. In one chamber we were about 200 persons. The special forces were on the roof. After they pierced it, they entered the chambers and threw chemicals. These chemicals burned the skin that was not covered with clothes. They used various chemicals. Afterwards we heard what they were. The special forces were determined to throw chemical bombs in closed spaces, where people were. With the chemicals, a person cannot think at all, cannot do anything and passes out. Comrade Ahmet Ibili died as other comrades too. Comrade

Ahmet Ibili sacrificed his life. The political prisoners had stated that they will self-immolate if an attack would start.

Ahmet Ibili, the comrade that was responsible for the hunger strikes, threw on himself something inflammable, came out of the corridor and said "I love you, whatever we said we did it, whatever we did we defended it". He said goodbye to us and went out. He yelled to the soldiers "Stop the attack or else i will self-immolate". He lighted the fire and continued running towards them. They shot him immediately. This picture i can never forget. Every day they would tear down the walls and we would gather towards the back.

The moments we lived are undescribable. A prisoner from an other organisation would yell to us from outside to surrender. We answered to her like we should. They took us from there forcibly and put us in transfer vans. Some comrades that attempted to rescue us, were killed immediately. In front of my eyes, many comrades were injured and 3 got killed. In all prisons, at total, 28 prisoners found death. We were transferred to white cells. During the route from prison to white cells, they tortured us all along. At the prison entrance, the torture continued. Until the morning they had us with handcuffs. They took us in groups and put us in the cells where they tortured us in all ways. The first 2 days, torturing was heavy, in order to break us and make us stop the hunger strike. That's why they tortured us. But we didn't stop, we continued. For two days they didn't give us nothing. While it was the beginning of winter and it had terrible cold, they left us naked, without clothes, covers and matresses. They left us without water, salt and sugar. They used everything as a tool of torture. I continued the hunger strike for about 160-170 days in my cell until i passed out. We had made an application that said if we ever pass out that we wouldn't accept force-feeding. After they took us for medical treatment. With these transfers they wanted to isolate us. In the hospital they force-fed us. Undescribable torture. Because of this, many hunger strikers have incurable disability problems. After force-feeding, they just threw us out of prison. Therefore we were free but we were like dead. I didn't remember anything, not even my family, nor my friends. Nobody. Until today i can't remember how i got transferred to the hospital, what happened there or how i got out of prison.

But there was a reason why they threw us out of prison. And that was not just to release us. It was to stop the resistance, to stop the hunger strike. That was their target. The message was "I let you outside, you are like dead. Think about it and stop the hunger strike." After that, the parents of political prisoners started hunger strike in the area Küçük Armutlu. After our release, we also went there where the parents on hunger strike were. When we arrived, we got informed that one comrade died. It was Zehra Kulaksiz, only 23 years old. Her young sister Canan Kulaksız had become a martyr earlier at the Küçük Armutlu area. To whoever of us political prisoners of DHKP-C the mind came back, continued the hunger strike from outside. Outside the prison, the relatives and us together, were around 20 hunger strikers. Küçük Armutlu area, where the hunger strike was going on, was targeted by the state through the media. They attacked here as they did also at the prisons. Comrades died from gunshots and chemicals. At total, 4 people died, 2 hunger strikers and 2 comrades that accompanied them. I continued the hunger strike in that area for about 3 months. After the attack, they arrested us and took us to the police station where they tortured us and send us to hospital. In the hospital they force-fed us in the wrong way. However, the hunger strike continued. On the other hand, the state harrased our families and tried to convince them to intervene and make us stop the hunger strike. At the same time, my sister in prison continued hunger strike until she died.

Very often we couldn't even get our victims from the hospitals or from prisons. Many times they tried to block funerals of heros and co-fighters in order to deter protests and demands of struggle. They tried to block us getting my sister by all means in order to prevent us doing a funeral that befits a fighter. The state always did propaganda against political prisoners. Even now, recently in our days, they voted new laws in order for the police to continue killing leftists but also generally against any protester. Now, police alone can decide and arrest people. Also, the responsibilities that the prefects have now are unlimited. They can do whatever they want. When someone hides their face in a protest, in any way, even with a simple balaclava, they have the right to imprison him. Also, if the police sees you with anything in your hands, even a rock, they can shoot you or send you to prison for years.

Ferhat Erturk

(Hunger striker in 2000 against F' type prisons in Turkey)

ΒΕΡΑ ΖΑΣΟΥΛΙΤΣ

ΟΛΓΑ ΛΙΟΥΜΠΑΤΟΒΙΤΣ

ΕΛΙΣΑΒΕΤ ΚΟΒΑΛΣΚΑΓΙΑ

ΑΝΑΜΝΗΣΕΙΣ ΤΡΟΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΣΣΩΝ