

António Ferreira de Jesus 1940-2013
In remembrance of an indomitable

52 years of State kidnapping!...

António Ferreira de Jesus, born in Oliveira do Bairro on the 30th of October 1940, died on the 6th of November of 2013. From his 73 years, he spent 53 in jail, in Portugal. An unique case in Europe. He was only 21 years outside of the walls... Which means he suffered 52 years of state kidnapping!

António was born in a economically poor environment, in which he saw two brothers die; one of starvation and another one due to lack of medical care. Dissatisfied with the social inequalities and with the terrific terrorism that economic violence embodies, he opposed to the theft of life - the imposed wage by dominion- and he started to expropriate the dominant class, trying to appropriate his life, preferring the risk that it carries rather than humiliate himself to beg or submit to a vile salary. He defended his mother from the beatings of his dad, energetically opposing himself to him when once again he hit her. Since then that never happened again. When he was 17 he was sent to prison. After serving his sentence he was forced to serve a famous fascist correctional measure in Leiria's Prison-School¹. Together with other "sons that were never children" he is shocked by the repression that exists there. When in contact with political prisoners in Lisbon's Prison he gained political consciousness.

He served 13 years in prison and suffered 4 of isolation and other punishments.

António left jail so revolted that he rob Leiria's Prison-School, with the aim of releasing the prisoners and setting fire to it. And because some workers were not being paid, his class feeling took him to burn the factory where they worked, firstly putting an end to the security guard of the factory, in self-defense, after a one to one fight. He performs some expropriations. Has the PIDE (political police from fascism) after him. One of his brothers, that participated on the frustrated incursion to the Prison-School, snitches him. He is condemned to the maximum sentence allowed then: 24 years in prison with the "delinquency", he was considered of difficult correction².

With the 25th of April 1974 revolution his sentence changes to 12 years with the condition that he could leave half way through it, meaning 6 years. Because he was a prisoner in struggle, he was forced to serve almost all of his sentence; there were only a few months to the totality of the 12 years when he was placed on probation, during which after a few months he was convicted to 18 months for carrying an illegal weapon and with his probation repealed. In 1991 he is given probation when his sentence is about to finish. After, in 1994 he is convicted to 10 years for expropriation and, still on the same year, convicted, with other comrades, to 18 years for the theft and kidnap of a famous heroin dealer.



from left to right: Maurício, Tó, Soares, Juvenal, António Ferreira de Jesus in the football field of Pinheiro da Cruz prison, in 1977

Wherever he went he left a trail: in Leiria's School Prison, during the fascist dictatorship, he was part of various protests against the miserable meals and prepotency. In Coimbra's prison, after the 25th of April of 1974, he mutinied with other prisoners during weeks and was on the summit of the dome from the prison communicating with the people in the street, explaining the reasons of the mutiny. After, in Paços de Ferreira prison he is elected president of Prisoners Association. A mutiny happens and a comrade dies after being shot by a burst of gunfire. He was standing next to Ferreira who escaped by an inch. The guard that shoot said the intention was to kill Ferreira and not the other guy. António is then transferred to the then so called Pinheiro da Cruz Penal Colony where he is kept in total isolation, in ward 1, for more than one year. "**They only lacked giving me a rope to hang myself**" t, were his own words. In 1976 a mutiny occurs in that ward. The prisoners got up on the roof and a lot of them were severely beaten.

In the process of creating some dynamics inside jail, where the prisoners would take conscience about themselves and their rights, introduced and taught then in many jails by the left-wingers that were imprisoned, António was considered by the authorities as a radical, due to his opinions and stance.

The right complains and protests in the media saying that the guards are the ones being punished instead of the prisoners and that prisons exist in "anarchy". In 1978 he is one of the main organizers of the escape made by a tunnel, excavated over dozens of meters in length, where 123 prisoners, including himself escaped from Vale de Judeus Prison where he was after being transferred from Pinheiro da Cruz. He is captured a few weeks later. Followed several riots, escape plans, hunger strikes, protests, and countless claims, complaints made to the media and other agencies, where his name was linked to, as well as punishments with the isolation of the entire prison population.

He suffered immense transfers in the middle of the night, sometimes to other wards, or to the disciplinary cells; other times for other isolation's with the r 111°³ regime; sometimes to other prison as an informal punishment to demobilize struggles.

The discrimination and bad faith on the paperwork related to the legal cumulative of the sentences, full of procedural irregularities, tortured him deeply, leading him to a situation equivalent to a life sentence disguised and leaving him with him full of uncertainties and with no hopes.

However, he always stood firm before the bottomless pit where he was thrown into. Almost

70 years old, in Pinheiro da Cruz Prison, he refused to change ward and told the jailers, courageously and decisively **"I will not move from here! By my own feet i wont move! I'll only move by force or dead!"** The mercenaries were amazed but in exchange for their vile salary they fulfilled the higher orders and took him by force, on a stretcher, not to a different ward but to the violent punishment of total isolation (the equivalent of the, suppressed in 2009, regime 111°), the Big Brother ⁴, the prison within prison, separated from all the other prisoners, in retaliation for his insubordination. He went on hunger, thirst and silence strike immediately. A strike of silence which implied that not a word was addressed to the enemy: prison guards or other state officials. The guards tried to talk with him with no result the social assistant did the same and no results, the educator, the psychologist, the nurse, the doctor, the psychiatrist and not a word. **"Enough! It is impossible to dialogue with the oppressors"** he said to himself. **"He went mad"** they said. **"They didn't know what to do...they were going crazy not knowing what decision to make"**, he later said. He only agreed to speak with his last lawyer, José Preto. This struggle aged him a lot and left him very weak in his health.

After chewing through his flesh and bones, almost about to die, half blind, with diabetes and after several painful strokes, he was set "free", on 15th of March 2012, perhaps to avoid thicken the already scandalous statistic mortality inside prisons...

How many deaths of comrades did he witness? (All death inside prison is a state crime!) How many brutal beatings to comrades and how much degradation did he saw? (Prison is in itself torture!...) And is terrorism not what he suffer and saw others suffer? How many times wasn't he induced to suicide? How many death threats did he suffer?

He refused to send letters legally because he was deeply disgusted by the censorship and surveillance that they suffered. He was almost sick with so much repugnance and indignation he felt towards the dissolute of his folders, concealed among other paperwork related with his processes to mislead the guards. Often the guards stole these folders during the raids. They were composed mainly of notes regarding prisoners beaten by guards and suspicious deaths, suspiciously by the guards and lack of medical care, as well as various presentations for various organizations and vindicating notebooks. He was always aware of what was happening. Everything he knew he would write down with the proper details, dates and names of those responsible.

António Ferreira, was a tough guy with principles, ethics and great firmness of mind, he was the persecuted, the persecuted within the punishment with various isolation, because he did not shut up regarding the monster that the institution of prison represents- What a place of extermination!- by defending his dignity and being supportive with his comrades. He would rather die than to loose his dignity, his most precious good.

Words by António, written in 2005 from Vale de Judeus Prison on his injunction sent to different national and international groups and organizations:

"Inside prison i defend ideas and convictions and for that i am persecuted. I defend my dignity and for that i am persecuted. I write for the press since 74 and for that I am persecuted. I became member and correspondent of Human and Prisoner Rights Associations and therefore I am persecuted. I proclaim anarchist ideas and for that I am persecuted. I call their attention to the neglect of their own laws, the systematic violation of Prison Reformation (Dec. Lei 265/79) and for that I am persecuted. I fight corruption, abuse of power, "free violence", incompetence, the miserable salary that prisoners get for work, for that I am brutally persecuted. Finally (and not as finally as that...) I am witness (here we start the most delicate part for them and the most dangerous for me) in several court cases against workers of this prison (Vale de Judeus) that are there being charged with corruption, abuse of power and the death of prisoners. For that I am hated, persecuted, repressed and life threatened!"



Homage graffiti to António in Setúbal December 2013

Despite all the obstructions inherent to prison, through his own effort he learned to read, the profession of Radio technician, locksmith, and mechanic with professional category. He was an autodidact. He read about history, sociology, politics, marxism, anarchism, philosophy, ecology, psychology, psychiatry, anti-psychiatry, physics, chemistry, astronomy, astrology and science. The more he read, the more aware of himself he became, and more disgusted.

Words for him had meaning - he wasn't a rhetoric or a juggler of words. He thought for himself therefore he was considered dangerous for the system. He wasn't indifferent to what was happening both world wide as locally. On the contrary: he was a socially informed individual and worried about what was going on. He used to comment surprised, worried and angry **"Why don't people outside these walls revolt to the point where the structures that destroy them fall?... How do people still take the speeches of the politicians and sustain the system that makes them live in humiliation?"** He roared with savage indignation at what was going on around him and outside the walls of prison. Yes, savage because they never domesticated him. He was a disobedient and expressed his feelings in a clear way. He was straight forward and despised the social "manners" in which he found a lot of hypocrisy and lies. He felt the injustices of this world in an exalted and palpitating way with a deep desire to fight them with all his strength and capabilities. AH! How he commented, fussed, suffered and lived the events that came to him through the newspapers, radio and later television! And how he knew so well the lies of the state speech!... How disgusted he was by the liar and charlatan political speech!... He was a misfit inside and outside the prison walls.

António Ferreira, a reference to the companions that don't let themselves be degraded and sold, was seen and felt with fascination and sympathy for those that were around him as real companions. He gave lectures and clarified the companions that were unaware of their rights. He inspired complete trust and fellowship between them. He was supportive and generous, a man of word, always side by side with his companions, fostering fellowship, the reading of good books, fight for the defense of dignity and freedom, inflating the spirits, inner strength and resistance to advancing the fight against the stings of power. He was a self-assertive, indomitable individual, enemy of authority, a fighter, in a constant state of outrage, always boiling and burning deep revolt

and constantly in confrontation with the guards and other clerks of power against the prison institution, in a courageous way, with bravery, exalted, with fearless determination which sometimes even scare closest companions due to the consequences that could arise there for him. He exuded revolt by every pore. He was seen as a ticking time bomb, so much anger was impregnated in him.

The detractors, some authentic stalinists who make and break history, were people that with the police version in the mouth seemed more police than the police itself, in order to invent stories (like the lie about the death of a shepherd and his dog by which António would have been convicted), tried to paint him as immoral, to create public opinion and fabricate opinion, however they can not erase what António Ferreira was and is, and all the extraordinary account of all prisoners in struggle and other companions who knew him and shared moments with him, both outside and inside the prison. Nobody wants to put him on a pedestal, he would be the first to reject it because he did not accept pedestals to anyone. However it is important to dot the is. He had the ability to recognize his mistakes within the paths outside-the-law, he never did it before the state, to which he did not recognize any legitimacy. The curriculum of these pseudo detractors and critics, some of whom journalist-police, compared with their service, only reveals demagoguery, servitude to power and many toads swallowed due to its complicity with this. But what do they know this hypocrites and false moralists about what is constantly living on the razor's edge and in permanent rebellion against the power and its various pitfalls? What do they know of the dignity? Some people know nothing of the clandestine struggle and what it entails and means. And not one of their hairs would reach António's heels in terms of being in this world of constant confrontation, even if subjected to the worst condition of prison that is the ultimate expression of oppression.

He left the prison guards and other officials bewildered and frightened with his invectives and threats of denunciation uttered in loud claim, echoing the sound of his words through the suffocating walls of prison architecture.

In the 80s, in Pinheiro da Cruz prison, by an arbitrary order of the guards, all the prisoners that were in the courtyard of the football field left except António Ferreira, he, like a lion, faced, chest to chest, a sub-chief and other jailers with a huge list of corruption charges; beatings of prisoners and left them with red faces, swollen with anger and their tails between their legs. He had a lot of information of corruption and existing rot in prison and played with such information clearly and fearlessly.

No jailer beaten him. He said loudly “ I do not allow, under no circumstances, that you touch me, not even with a nail. I'll die after but first I'll send you to scrap !”

Ferreira was the one that did not talk to them (cops and other prison staff), and everyone who was seen talking a lot with them was considered suspect for him. He had many guards and prisoners, acting like police officers, watching all his steps. All prisoners who dared to accompany him on the playground were recorded in red ink on their files, which in itself, stigmatized and harmed, informally and arrogant their rights and their possibilities of exit on probation.



António Ferreira was buried in the cemetery of Portimão, on his tomb reads “Proud, indomitable, enemy of authority, your dream for freedom will never be destroyed!
Love and Anarchy!
Thy fellows!”

To preserve his innermost self, his dignity, his personality after these 52 years in prison created a whole armor, composed of bitterness, roughness and simultaneously mixed with an exalted and frightening revolt, which came sometimes to ward off his closest companions. Only those that knew him a little more deeply knew of his great sensitivity and generosity, as well as some of the dreams that made him move on and resist. António repeatedly expressed in public his deep appreciation for the extraordinary solidarity he received from national and international comrades and that because of this support he could resist and escape being killed in prison. Solidarity that did not fail him out of prison and gave him a roof until his last day of life. Thanks to all comrades !

It is with deep sympathy, companionship and friendship that we share his memory, and with deep sorrow we feel his passing.

The spirit of António Ferreira did not die! See you always !
From your companions!

Foot notes:

¹ Sentence of imprisonment imposed by the fascist regime for “bad behavior” beyond the initial penalty.

² With the fascist penal code when a court condemned an individual to any penalty, for example, 5 years in prison, this meant that the individual could get, besides the 5 years, another penalty of 3 years; and if the individual had another disciplinary sanction applied to him 3 more years were added to his sentence, so the individual could meet a total of $5+3+3+3=14$ years in prison. In António's case if it had not happened the April 25, 1974 he could have served $24+3+3+3=33$ years of prison. The delinquency was a punitive measure that could go up to 3 periods of 3 year convictions at a time, which could be added to the initial conviction, according to the criteria of management of prisons. And to be considered of difficult correction by the court implied measures of very special watch on the individual.

³. In 2009 the legislature replaced the 111 with an equivalent one. Article 111 of decree -law nº265/79 of 1 August says:
1-inmate may apply to special security measures when, due to his behavior or mental state there is serious danger of escape or practice of violence against himself or against persons or things.

2-Are the following special security measures authorized:a) Prohibition of use of certain objects or its seizure;b) Observation of the inmate during the night; c) Separation from the remainder of the inmate prison population; d) Deprivation or restriction on permanence in the open; e) use of handcuffs; f) Admission of the inmate in a special security cell.

3-The measures provided for in the preceding paragraph is permitted where it is not otherwise possible to avoid or remove the danger of drawn or escape of prisoners or where there is considerable disturbance of order and security of the establishment.

4-The special security measures remain only as long as the danger which led to his application.

5-The measures referred to in paragraph 2 shall not be used as a disciplinary measure

⁴ Big Brother designates the name that the prisoners gave to the prison built, very sophisticated and full of surveillance cameras, completely separated and isolated within the prison of Pinheiro da Cruz in the nineties. Only guards and other prison staff except lawyers could have contact with inmates that were totally isolated from each other in authentic cages of reinforced concrete and steel.

⁵ The prison itself is punishment/torture. A person sentenced to imprisonment is already suffering punishment and within the punishment that prison is, a person suffers others punishments, such as cells of “dwelling”, in disciplinary cells, total isolation regimes, with separation of the entire prison population, tec., beyond the oppression inherent in those who exercise authority.