

Article in support of Vincenzo Vecchi

In order to publicize Vincenzo Vecchi's situation, we are mobilizing. On Thursday August 8th 2019, Vincenzo who had been living in Rochefort-en-Terre in Morbihan for 8 years, well-integrated in local life, was arrested by the police. His arrest took place under a European Arrest Warrant. He was taken to the Vezin-le-Coquet detention center, near Rennes, for a surrender procedure to Italy. Vincenzo had taken part in the 2001 Genoa protest against the G8 and in 2006 in an unauthorized anti-fascist counter demonstration in Milan. According to the Scelba law, the so-called "official" demonstration organized in Milan by the extreme right-wing party "Fiammataricolore", should have been banned for promoting fascism.

Many protesters were arrested in Genoa (over 600 arrests), ten of whom were sentenced as an example to very heavy jail terms ranging from 6 to 15 years ! These convictions were handed down under the charge of "devastation and looting", a subtlety in the Italian penal code, the Rocco code, which was introduced in 1930 by the Fascist regime and reactivated during the Milan trial to justify abusive crackdowns. The Rocco code makes it possible to actually punish someone with very heavy jail sentences for merely being present or taking part in a demonstration, without any proof of guilt whatsoever. The "ten of Genoa", including Vincenzo, were thus convicted with disproportionate penalties: a 12 years and 6 months sentence for Vincenzo Vecchi. He therefore decided to avoid this sentence, as disproportionate as unfair, and find refuge in France.

We should note that at the Genoa demonstration, the police repression was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR): some of the perpetrators of police violence against protesters were not prosecuted. Those who were prosecuted have not served any prison term to date – even though this police crackdown had inflicted inhuman and degrading treatment on demonstrators, in the periphery of the summit. According to the ECHR, this treatment amounted to "acts of torture". This, of course, raises questions as to the legitimacy of the judgment and largely discredits the harsh prison sentences imposed on demonstrators.

We must also point out that the Genoa European Arrest Warrant (EAW) is incomplete and inconsistent, as the Court and the advocate-general acknowledged in Rennes during the hearings of 13 and 14 August. As to the EAW related to Milan, it is a gross manipulation as revealed by the Italian lawyers. Vincenzo has already served his sentence. And an EAW cannot be issued for a sentence which has already been served. The Italian Courts could not be unaware of the ruling by the Milan Court of Appeal on the 9 January 2009, which certified that the sentence for the alleged offences committed in 2006 had been served. It seems the Italian legal system has intentionally made the charges worse.

We demand that both EAWs be permanently set aside, which would cancel the surrender procedure. If the French Courts agreed to surrender Vincenzo to Italy, they would be supporting a Court that ignores the very foundation of our judicial system which is based on evidence. Through the EAW, they would actually extend a freedom-killing law to the European judicial area. This is the reason why, unjustly convicted by Italy and at present held in prison in France, Vincenzo Vecchi must be released.