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Coronavirus and Prisons

Statement from Anarchist Group 'Bakunin' (Rome
& Lazio)

Anarchist Group "Bakunin" – Rome and Lazio

March 9, 2020

While there are measures, mostly consisting of prohibitions, for the "Coronavirus emergency", nobody seems to be worried about a place where the risk of contagion is very high: **prison**.

We have been informed that no measures have been taken to prevent the epidemic.

No sterilization of the environments, no spreading of hygiene rules, no temperature checks (and not even the self-declaration of having had contact with subjects at risk) by those who enter the institute, no screening of prisoners.

All in a situation of chronic overcrowding where respect for the distance of one meter between one person and another is unimaginable.

The only measures taken are to further penalize the prisoners such as preventing the entrance of volunteers, the blocking of leave permits and the suspension or sharp reduction of visits with relatives.

The prison is once again representing the dust that is swept under the carpet, the problem to be forgotten by pretending that it doesn't exist even when, in situations like this, the lives

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of the 63,932 men and women in prison are put at risk, most of them still awaiting a final judgement, 23,000 with a sentence of less than 3 years, 375 minors and 55 children under the age of six, imprisoned with their mothers.

We are for the abolition of all prisons, we consider them to be the bad conscience of society, the instrument used to avoid solving the social problems that result in the need to commit crimes in order to survive.

We consider it intolerable that, in an emergency situation which, in the name of defending against contagion, freedom of association and freedom of assembly are eliminated, that there are no measures to restore freedom to those who live in a situation of restriction and would be certain victims of an epidemic behind bars.

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***Note from Anarchists Worldwide:** Since translating this article we have learned from corporate media that revolts have broken out in recent days at several prisons in Italy following the cancellation of visitation rights due to Coronavirus fears. One prisoner has died in unclear circumstances during a revolt at the prison in Modena, near Bologna. Revolts have also taken place at prisons in Frosinone, Poggioreale and Alessandria. Family members, loved ones and friends of prisoners have also demonstrated outside the prisons in solidarity. The photo accompanying this article shows prisoners demonstrating on the roof of a prison in Poggioreale, near Naples.*