

# The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO



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**M**ore than five years after the discovery of Giulio Regeni's tortured body near the highway connecting Cairo with Alexandria, the kidnapping and subsequent killing of the young researcher, who went to Egypt to complete his university thesis, still remain unsolved in terms of identifying the culprits.

As a result of the unanimous indignation of Italian public opinion together with the incessant, courageous appeals to justice launched by the parents, Paola and Claudio Regeni, the Italian authorities in charge of the case, both police and judicial, have invested every possible effort in this long period of time in order to obtain evidence from the Egyptian counterparts regarding the precise responsibilities. Any attempt to collaborate has been met with various obstacles, that is to say delays, omissions, refusals and intended activities of misdirection, in particular the attribution of the murder to four offenders, killed in a shooting. Against this background of impenetrable reticence, the initial suspicion of a direct involvement of the local security services in the murder of Giulio has gradually turned into real conviction, in the same way that the motive for the heinous crime, may be connected without any possible doubt to Giulio's academic activity, considered "subversive" by local authorities.

In the past five years even measures of a political nature, such as the suspension of relations between Parliaments

ordered in November 2018 by the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the constitution of a commission of inquiry within the chamber shortly after, have not been able to induce the government of Cairo to the indispensable collaboration.

Similarly, the exhortations for the re-establishment of the truth addressed to the North African authorities by various European bodies (we bring to mind the European Parliament resolution of December 2020 for its relevance) have remained, in practice, without results.

Despite these objective difficulties, our investigating judiciary was able, at the end of 2020, to indict four senior officials of the Egyptian security services, on the basis of the evidence available, on heavy charges of kidnapping, aggravated murder and aggravated personal injury. The first hearing of the trial, which will take place in the absence of the accused who are unavailable, is imminent in Rome.

Having up to now maintained the controversy on a purely bilateral level has made it impossible for Italy to oppose, if not with formal positions, the stubborn attitude of non-collaboration on the Egyptian side. This has recently been reaffirmed by the "Zaki case", the naturalized Italian student who was incarcerated in Cairo for one year in the absence of precise and documented charges.

*To be continued on page 5...*

Marcello Filotei (Editor)

### PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO

Colle di Miravalle - 38068 Rovereto  
T. +39 0464.434412  
F. +39 0464.434084  
info@fondazioneoperacampana.it  
www.fondazioneoperacampana.it

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AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR GIUSEPPE NESI

# Let's start listening

## THE PEOPLES' RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

There are things we all agree on even if we don't know them. For example, the self-determination of peoples. Who is against it? Nobody. But what exactly does it mean? "It is a relatively recent concept, yet it has quickly acquired international reach. Self-determination is the right that people possess so as to be able to act for the full realization of their ideals, and it is relevant both from an external and an internal point of view", explains Professor Giuseppe Nesi, Faculty of Law at Trento University, with specific expertise, particularly with regard to international criminal justice, international organizations, protection of human rights and international relations. Common topics at the "Bell".

### External and internal?

"External" law applies in situations of decolonization, military occupation and apartheid. In these circumstances, a population could also resort to violent actions to assert their identity.

### And "internal"?

From an "internal" point of view, self-determination is achieved when there is the possibility of implementing the form of government desired by the majority of the population.

*So violence and democracy united in one right? It might seem like a contradiction.*

The two aspects of self-determination may appear very distant one from the other, but they are not contrasting. In fact, while an individual population always has the right to choose the form of government that



Notice to swimmers in South Africa in 1989. Durban beach is reserved for "the sole use of members of the white race group"

pleases them, external self-determination is recognized by the international community only if the aforementioned conditions are met, that is to say, a situation of colonial domination, military occupation or a segregationist regime.

*As current as ever, it is enough to read the news of the last few weeks which refers to an age-old question of self-determination that perhaps cannot be defined as either internal or external without displeasing one of the parties: the conflict in the Middle East, which started after the Second World War.*

The situation in the Middle East is very particular, as the Palestinian population considers its territory occupied by Israel, while Tel Aviv considers the same lands legitimately under its rule. The issue was further complicated when the Israeli government, in response to actual or suspected attacks, gradually expanded its territorial base, imposing on the entire population and maintaining what it believes to be its own borders by force. History teaches us that this way doesn't usually work.

*An open wound, an emblematic example of how we should not act internationally if we really want to allow each population to decide its own future in freedom and peace.*

Unfortunately, yes, but at the same time it must be emphasized that the United Nations has always promoted the vision that envisages two states, one Palestinian and one Israeli, neighboring and peaceful. All attempts to resolve this crisis that have come close to reaching this goal have been inspired by this vision, but in some periods have taken big steps backwards. The latest setback in the peace process was caused by the US administration led by President Donald Trump, which went so far as to manifest provocative behaviour, such as the decision to transfer the US Embassy to Jerusalem, a city that has always been disputed between the two parts for historical and religious reasons.

*Taking this reasoning on a global scale, we must ask ourselves whether or not multilateral institutions have the means to promote the settlement of conflicts between peoples or states.*





Giuseppe Nesi

It would be enough to apply the Charter of the United Nations, where already in Article 1 and then in 55 explicit reference is made to the self-determination of peoples. This is the DNA of multilateral institutions. An awareness that dates back to the end of the First World War, with the position taken by US President Woodrow Wilson regarding the need to guarantee each country the possibility of choosing its own form of government.

Multilateral institutions have many opportunities to intervene and in several cases they have achieved historic results.

*So let's also make some examples of mediations that ended well. Matters that are in the newspapers less, because it is known that peace makes less news than war.*

There is too little talk of the decolonization process in the second half of the last century, an enormous phenomenon that mainly concerned Africa, but which also affected Asia. There have been great success stories otherwise today we would not have 54 African states and huge and important countries like India freed from the colonial yoke. Usually we look at the failures of multilateral institutions, but it would also be right to point out that their action, particularly in the 1960s, was particularly effective.

*How important is the cultural approach in the export of peace and dialogue?*

It is fundamental, if by cultural setting we mean the ability to reason, to understand the motives of others and

not to act dishonestly. Unfortunately, it should be noted that in recent years on an international level there has been an advance of openly intolerant political groups. They are not prevailing, except with some unfortunate exceptions, but they have returned, gained a certain following and in some cases have even reached government. We live in a historical moment in which it is particularly important to be vigilant, especially by those who have the cultural background to understand what is happening. We must not underestimate the threats to dialogue, multilateralism, tolerance, respect and above all the ability to listen.

*Speaking of the ability to listen, the great Sicilian writer, Gesualdo Bufalino, presenting his novel "La Luce e il Lutto" (Light and Mourning) summarized the social role of art by describing a personal experience: "I learned not to steal by listening to Mozart".*

Listening educates, but you have to be accustomed to it. "More concerts, fewer wars" could be an effective slogan.



Gandhi, in the center, and the crowd during the "salt march", a non-violent demonstration that took place in 1930 in India against the salt tax imposed by the British government.

## REPORT OF THE GNAFC

# Famine alarm

## CONFLICTS ARE THE MAIN CAUSE OF WORLD HUNGER

**I**n the West we refer to appetite, in the less developed world one refers to "hunger". But the word itself says little. In order to clarify its meaning it needs further specifications and adjectives. For example, it can be "chronic" implying a serious case that occurs when a person is unable to consume sufficient food for a prolonged period and therefore cannot guarantee a normal and active life. But it gets worse: acute food insecurity, the state in which the inability to consume adequate food puts an individual's life or livelihood in immediate danger. The measurement of these human conditions is scientific and is based on internationally accepted parameters capable of identifying the characteristics of the term "extreme" hunger.

For us, where the risks related to obesity are kept under control, a lack of food is something very far away, usually linked to the stories of grandparents, who, however, when reminiscing, season the stories about empty plates with bombs, invasions, retreats and resistances. In short, conflicts. Where there are wars there is hunger. Here we do not have fighting, but in other places yes, and there the question is very topical and the prospects are very bad. The number of people living in acute food insecurity and in urgent need of assistance reached the highest figure in the last five years in 2020. The alarm comes from the

report published by the Global Network Against Food Crises (Gnafc), an international alliance of United Nations and European Union agencies, which study the situation together with governmental and non-governmental bodies.



A few numbers clarify the situation better. The problem affects 155 million people in 55 countries and territories. The reasons are mainly related to conflicts and economic shocks. The increase compared to 2019 is 20 million, a figure that raises a distressing alarm about a worrying trend. Acute food insecurity has continued to grow relentlessly since 2017. In short, Covid has played its part, but the problem had already arisen earlier and was not adequately addressed.

But since there is no equality even among the poor, it is necessary to go even deeper into the evaluation of poverty. Among the 155 million hungry there is a minority of just over 130,000, who live at a level of food insecurity referred to by experts as "catastrophic". They are found mainly in Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen. A little better, so to speak, there are another 28 million people considered at an "emergency" level, one step away from starvation. Fortunately, many lives have been saved by humanitarian interventions that have prevented the spread of famine. As usual, it is the weakest who pay the highest price: in the 55 countries or territories hit by food crises and presented in the report, there are over 75 million children under the age of five found to have a development deficit, more than 15 million of which are perished.



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Acute food insecurity has continued to grow unabated since 2017

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It is no longer news but Africa is the continent most affected, with 98 million people at risk. However, the crisis does not spare other areas of the world such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Haiti, which share the sad distinction of being included in the top ten among the countries with the worst food emergencies recorded last year.

The incriminated phenomena have always been the same for some decades. War is in first place. Conflict is the main reason that has plunged about 100 million people into acute food insecurity, a huge increase compared to 77 million in 2019. In second place, economic shocks, including Covid-19, passed from 24 million people affected in 2019 to over 40 in 2020. Extreme climate events instead put approximately 16 million people at risk, less than half compared to 2019.

Will it get better in the future? Unlikely. «The outlook for 2021 is bleak. Conflicts, restrictions due to the pandemic causing economic hardship and the persistent threat of adverse climatic conditions will probably continue to be behind the food crises », explained the experts commenting on the data.

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Among the 155 million people at risk, more than 130,000 live at a level of malnutrition referred to by experts as “catastrophic”

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You could put all the blame on the virus and go ahead as has always been, but in reality the pandemic has revealed already existing fragilities in the global food system, emphasizing the need to put more equitable, sustainable and resilient processes in place. In short, if we want to aim for sustainable development capable of feeding 8.5 billion people on a regular basis in 2030, we need to radically transform an economic process that works with those who have an ‘appetite’ and neglects those suffering from ‘hunger’.

*To be continued on page 1...*

As highlighted by a seminar recently held in the capital by the Center for International Political Studies (Cespi), an international instrument, the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments, comes to the rescue to overcome situations of impasse such as the above. The Convention was adopted by the United Nations in 1984 and both Italy and Egypt have joined.

In fact, Article 30 of the Convention states that - in the event of failure of direct negotiations (in this case rendered useless by the Egyptian conduct) and in the absence of an agreement for arbitration - the dispute will be submitted to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

It is evident how in this way full cooperation of both parties on a judicial level becomes indispensable, if you wish to direct the verdict of the high court in your favor.

It is a path, which for various reasons, is not easy and, consequently, has been pursued very little (so far, only one case has been decided and a second is in progress), however considering the insurmountable difficulties encountered by Italy in the search for truth with regard to the “Regeni case” from 2016 to today, it seems worthy nonetheless of consideration.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President

## The exhibition «Human Rights?»

**T**he exhibition “Human Rights?” opens on June 5 on the Colle di Miravalle, now in its fifteenth edition, twelve of which were held at the “Bell”. This year the event will focus on Goal 8 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda: the right to work. The artistic director Roberto Ronca has selected artists from all over the

world, so as to be able to enjoy many different points of view, also linked to cultures far from ours. Until 5 October, 141 works from 29 countries may be admired. All information is available on the website and on the social networks of the Foundation and the International Association of Plastic Arts Italy (Aiapi) which has collaborated for the event.



## HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# From Germany to Hungary

## ROTATION IN THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS



**H**ungary takes over the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the second time in the thirty years since its accession to the Organisation. Recalling the Council of Europe's mission to build a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity, Hungary will seek to further promote and strengthen human rights, democratic values and the rule of law.

Hungary has taken over the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from Germany during a video-conference meeting in Hamburg, chaired by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas, with representatives of the Organisation's 47 member States. The ministerial meeting was an opportunity to take important decisions on the future of the Council of Europe and

to discuss key issues including human rights and artificial intelligence, the Organisation's monitoring system, the European Social Charter and cooperation with the European Union. But there is more: at the end of the ministerial session, Germany passed the bell of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers to Hungary. The new Chair of the Committee of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, presented the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency, which will run for six months.

The Hungarian Presidency will focus particularly on five main themes: promoting the effective protection of national minorities, interreligious dialogue, the "next generation": children's rights, youth participation and Roma inclusion, technological and environmental challenges.

Hungary stated that it wishes to use the opportunity afforded by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

to help strengthen the community of culture formed by a Europe enriched by its diversity, confident in its identity and open to the world. It is in this spirit that the Hungarian Presidency will aim at supporting the importance of effective protection of national minorities in Europe and intercultural dialogue, seeking to strengthen the political, legal, social and cultural cohesion of our continent and combatting the divisive factors such as intolerance – whether political, cultural or religious. In addition to longstanding traditional commitments, Hungary would also like to promote the ongoing work on our common responses to new challenges faced by modern societies, such as the rapid development of new technologies, with a particular focus on the impact of the application of artificial intelligence in everyday life and in relation to human rights. Finally, in the spirit of a forward-looking approach and thus in the awareness of being responsible for the preservation of a healthy environment for present and future generations, the Hungarian Presidency has also included issues related to environmental challenges among its priorities.

The Magyar country will continue its mandate until 17 November, when the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers will be draped in the Tricolour Flag and Italy will take over. But that is another story.

Giuseppe Zaffuto, spokesperson for the Council of Europe in Italy



*The Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Péter Szijjártó*

## HAPPENING AT THE UN

# A University for Peace

## EDUCATION IS THE BEST MEANS TO STOP CONFLICT



**I**t is nice not to feel alone, to know that there are people who work for the same purpose, for example to “provide humanity with a higher education for Peace with the aim of promoting the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all human beings, stimulating cooperation between peoples and helping reduce obstacles and threats to the world, in line with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.” With resolution 35/55 of December 5, 1980, the General Assembly of the United Nations entrusted this mission to the University for Peace. It is an intergovernmental organization that organizes its main campus in Costa Rica, the first country in the world to have unilaterally abolished its army. It was 1949, and the civil war had just ended. The relationship between conflict and weapons seemed clear. Goodbye guns, welcome peace. It worked.

The University Charter sets out some general principles that could be incorporated by any Constitution, and which are not too far from those expressed

in the Memorandum accepted by the countries that go up to the Hill to hoist their flag. First of all, peace is not a period that elapses between one conflict and another, but an objective that must be achieved and guaranteed “through the most precious and most effective resource that man possesses: education”. Starting from this principle, however, it should be noted that although every country since its foundation has assumed the obligation to guarantee a co-existence without clashes, “up to now the best tool has not been used to achieve the goal: education”.

Some attempts have been made that go in a different direction, for example by promoting arms reductions. The objective is certainly to be pursued, but the method may prove ineffective if not accompanied by an education in dialogue supported by the recognition “of the central importance of training and research as the foundation of Peace and progress and as a predominant means with which to reduce the prejudice and hatred on which violence, conflicts and terrorism are based ».

In short, there were wars even when there were no weapons. An ignoramus who throws a stone at your head to steal the dinner earned after a mammoth hunt can be found in any era. It is not enough to remove the stones, you have to explain to the culprit that if he is hungry he can ask for something for tonight, and tomorrow he can wake up early to go look for something for the next dinner. It is a complicated speech, which requires a series of different notions. For this reason, the university’s task is to educate, focusing in particular on “the dissemination of fundamental knowledge for the full development of the human person and of society through interdisciplinary study”.

But no one can do it alone. And also for this reason the university, its rector Francisco Rojas Aravena and its honorary president, the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres, have set among their main objectives that of “establishing a series of structures at the peripheral level that allow the widest possible catchment areas in the different parts of the planet ». The “Bell” is present. Every day at 9.30pm. For the furthest away in streaming.



IT HAPPENED TODAY

# The Palestinian flag at the Colle



June 4, 1960: Fourth and last international Gloria at the Bell of the Fallen in the presence of the representatives of 17 States



June 17, 2000 The Occupied Palestinian Territory adheres to the Peace Memorandum. The Palestinian flag is hoisted on the Hill in the presence of Reggente Pietro Monti, Foundation President and Palestinian Authority Minister Ziad Ali Khalil AbuZayyad (in the center with the flag in his hands)