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Prison, Islamic Radicalization and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy

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Abstract

Radicalization in prison is a well-developed field of research that, particularly in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, has involved academics and practitioners in the attempt to highlight possible push and pull factors and dynamics, as well as useful strategies for preventing and countering extremism inside the facilities. Like every subject of great interest, it has given rise to numerous theories about the possible approaches to radical violence, some even at odds with each other. However, there is almost unanimous agreement that isolation from external society and the inadequate management of the right to profess one's religious faith within prisons may be elements that increase the risk of intramural radicalization. In Italy, the COVID-19 pandemic interfered heavily not only in the lives of people belonging to free society but also – and perhaps even more – in the lives of prisoners, resulting in the total isolation of prison facilities from the outside community. The dramatic efforts to protect public health have effectively eclipsed every other right, including – for prisoners – practising one's faith with the guidance of authorized religious leaders. The present article explores how and why these anti-virus changes in the management of the Italian penitentiary could have influenced the risk of intramural radicalization.

Keywords Islamic radicalization, prisons, pandemics, human rights

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives of all human beings, regardless of nationality, by forcing each to change their priorities and re-organize their own lives. Prisons have not been exempt from this disrupting earthquake and have found themselves experiencing a not-yet finished emergency, resulting in a general worsening of daily life for prisoners and prison staff.

Since the very beginning of the first pandemic wave, because social distancing appeared most likely to be the uniquely effective measure to prevent contagion, prison administrators felt obliged to close prison doors and avoid any contact with the outside world. In the attempt to protect prisoners' lives, prison officials in nearly

every European nation imposed a moratorium on all activities that involved people entering prisons from the outside world. Similar restrictions were applied to religious observances that needed to be led by external officiants: prisoners from all the different faiths have had to organize their spiritual practices without the support of their spiritual guides in order to keep the virus outside the prison walls. In addition to those difficulties faced by prisoners – still present though somewhat ameliorated by the downsizing of the emergency itself intending to improve inmates' quality of life – it is relevant to ask if and how the pandemic may also have increased the risk of radicalization inside the facilities.

For at least the last 20 years, practitioners and academics have been engaged in research and discussion about the role of prisons in the radicalization process, and experts have scrupulously worked toward offering efficient strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in these closed environments (Silke and Veldhuis 2017). In the process of this research effort, the analysis of the role of religion inside prison took on a dimension that would never have been explored before the events of 11 September 2001 and after due to the relatively small prison population inside the world's penal institutions (Ciluffo et al. 2006). The profession of faith, rather than being considered a right of the inmate, has become the focus of suspicion and fear that calls for specific scrutiny. The perceived risk of radicalization in prison has generated numerous reflections (Ravagnani and Romano 2017) in Italy, both from inside the prison system (Istituto Superiore di Studi Penitenziari 2012) and outside society (De Pascale 2017). Before the pandemic, the principal concern had been the possible link between the degrading conditions of life inmates often faced while in jail (Jones 2014) and their radicalization path as a means to regain dignity and self-respect.

At the beginning of 2020, the situation seemed to radically change due to the pandemic and consequent desperate efforts to protect prisons from the invisible viral enemy: suddenly, the top priorities of the Italian prison administration shifted away from the radicalization problem to addressing COVID-19-related crises. With all the prison staff preoccupied with the virus, the radicalization risk and nearly all other security concerns were temporarily shelved. Nobody appeared to consider whether the new and extremely restrictive provisions of intramural life might increase the risk of violent radicalization.

Therefore, this paper examines the possibility of such a link by looking for possible connections between the special prison regime imposed by the pandemic and whether it has increased the risks of radicalization in Italian prisons.

THE ITALIAN PRISONS IN THE PANDEMIC ERA

In March 2020, the Italian prison system suddenly changed. The pathological prison overcrowding that has characterized at least the last 15 years (Ministero della Giustizia 2020) now threatened to drastically worsen its effects on Italian prisoners' mental and physical health in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring substantial efforts to reduce the number of prisoners significantly.

The increase in the prison population registered in January 2020 reflected a permanent growing trend in Italy: 61,230 persons were held in 189 facilities, while the

estimated optimum capacity was 50,692; foreigners represented 32.5% of the whole prison population (with all the specific needs that need to be considered; see Durnescu, Montero Pérez de Tudela, and Ravagnani 2016; Montero Pérez de Tudela and Ravagnani 2016), while women accounted for only 4.4%. The advent of the pandemic and the consequent need to quickly reduce the prison population led to a positive record in reducing the number of people inside prison: in May 2020, the number fell to 52,978 (Ministero della Giustizia 2020).

The awareness of the overcrowded penitentiary system, one of the most vulnerable environments regarding the virus, demanded the implementation of specific national strategies that would result in restructuring the whole prison organization. To better understand the mentioned changes, it can be useful to proceed with a short presentation of the principal provisions introduced during the very first pandemic period:

- (1) Articles 2(c), 8 and 9 of Law Decree no. 11/2020. The provisions contained in the articles resulted in the immediate and substantial closure of some prisons to prevent the spread of contagion from outside.
- (2) Articles 123 and 124 of Law Decree no. 178/2020. These articles aimed to reverse the flow of prisoners by favouring deflationary measures. Specifically, the two articles refer to the possibility of applying for home detention for residual sentences of less than 18 months. Those articles simplified, on the one hand, the procedure of access to alternative sanctions (for prisoners who are serving a sentence for crimes listed in Article 4 of the Penitentiary Law, excluding the most serious offences, especially those linked to organized crime or to prisoners who had participated in prison riots). On the other hand, the articles introduced electronic monitoring for sentences longer than six months, expanding the application and scope of an already existing rule. They further made it possible to use 75-day licences for people serving semi-liberty to keep them out of prison while waiting for the evolution of the virus to become apparent.
- (3) The document of the General Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, dated 1 April 2020, contains important observations on the reduction of the prison population during the coronavirus emergency. The document focuses on precautionary measures and enforcement of new prison sentences. In an illuminating paragraph, the General Prosecutor wrote that the coronavirus emergency must be an element in evaluating the application of all existing factors to deprivation of liberty and a prerequisite for their interpretation.

He also remembered that, compared to the past, Law no. 47/2015 had already narrowed the scope of the application of pre-trial detention significantly, outlining subjective situations of inapplicability of that penalty based on reasons of age, family and health – in which the risk from COVID-19 contagion can certainly be taken into account and can be overcome only in the presence of exceptional needs of security.

Moreover, the General Prosecutor document suggests that sentencing to prison must be a measure of last resort. To quickly reduce the number of prisoners, he underscored the need for massive recourse to the provisional

application of alternative actions, even beyond all the limits inherent in the emergency and penitentiary legislation.

In another important paragraph, he hypothesized that application for probation is only based on volunteer activities (i.e. without the requirement of a specific rehabilitative programme that had previously been a mandatory condition of probation.) The General Prosecutor emphasized that this kind of solution would have probably been necessary anyway to address the complicated situation in the short- to medium-term future characterized by serious difficulties in finding suitable work for people in the extant probation regime.

- (4) The Opinion of the Higher Council of the Judiciary on Law Decree no. 18/2020, in which the Council asked for solutions to reduce prison overcrowding, including interventions to defer entry into prison of those sentenced to short sentences for the entire duration of the emergency, applicable to minor crimes.
- (5) Law Decree no. 29 of 10 May 2020 (for reasons related to the COVID-19 emergency) instituted urgent measures regarding home detention and deferment of sentences, as well as steps to replace pre-trial detention in prison with house arrest as optional even for prisoners sentenced for the most serious crimes (such as organized crimes, terrorism and mafia activity). The decree also added new rules concerning prisoners' contact with relatives or authorized persons.

As a corollary to these instruments, the Department of Penitentiary Administration issued 12 circulars from February to March 2020 containing instructions for prison facilities to prevent contagion and manage the emergency (Garante nazionale dei diritti delle persone private della libertà personale 2020).

The most important set of new rules concerned the option to use video calling instead of personal visits. This change represented an innovation for most Italian prisons because, even if the use of Skype had been formally authorized for the previous 10 years, only a few prisons were equipped with the necessary video-calling equipment. This resulted in a partial delay and different availability among the facilities for implementing this new right due to the necessity to provide suitable spaces and tools for the accessibility of the service. After the very first moment of reorganization, prisoners had the chance to call their relatives every day, and this helped in the mitigation of the negative consequences of general isolation. The Internet inside the facilities was also meant to grant the same continuity to school classes as for students outside the prison, but only a few prisoners could regularly attend their courses online.

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH IN ITALIAN PRISONS AND THE RISK OF RADICALIZATION

When analysing prisons as potential sites for radicalization (Mulcahy, Merrington, and Bell 2013), it appears that the emergency has been addressed inadequately. For example, prisoners and prison officers have been left without the necessary facial

masks for a long period, especially when the rules of social distancing could not be applied at all. Later, the vaccination campaign in prisons began with the Astra Zeneca vaccine drug that was under question in Europe, due to its reported lethal consequences; this would have been a good way in radical arguments to recruit vulnerable prisoners.

To understand the impact of the pandemic on possible intramural radicalization narratives, it is worth briefly considering the role of religion in the Italian prison system. The Penitentiary Law (Article 26) attributes great importance to faith and its precepts (in line with the European Penitentiary Rules and Mandela's Rules). According to Article 26 of the Penitentiary Law, the freedom of religion rule must be guaranteed even when someone is deprived of liberty and is an important element of re-educative prison treatment. Furthermore, this fundamental principle is one of the main arguments that academics and practitioners consider relevant when debating preventing and countering radicalization among prisoners (Baaken et al. 2020; Vellenga and De Groot 2019). Freedom of religion also means having access to a specific food, enjoying special places for prayer and being able to count on the presence of spiritual guides who are formally recognized by the religious communities to which they belong. These conditions are crucial elements granting respect due to the right to profess and practise one's religion.

In Italy, however, the burden of implementing "minority" religious precepts has long been delegated to the prisoners themselves, thus leaving ample room for the figure of the "do-it-yourself imam" negatively regarded for fostering the spread of non-Orthodox religious doctrines, radically departing from those generally recognized. By contrast, Catholic prisoners have had the chance to count on the figure of the Catholic chaplain thanks to the specific and unique recognition of Catholicism within the prison system in Italy. In fact, in 1975, the effective date of the Penitentiary Law, the prison population was very different from today: Catholics represented the majority of prisoners and foreigners of other faiths were just absent or a very small minority.

The role of the spiritual guides belonging to non-Catholic religions – particularly Muslim – is still marginal and hardly recognized by the Italian prison administration. External exponents of religious paths differ from the Catholic one depending on specific agreements stipulated, each time, among different interlocutors. The last of these agreements were signed by the Italian Department of Corrections and the Union of Italian Islamic Communities (UCOII) (Servizio Informazione Religiosa Agenzia d'informazione 2020). The present status is that 13 imams are authorized by the Italian Department of Prison Administration in the framework of the mentioned agreement, and 43 guides are allowed outside this specific instrument.

The first obstacle in qualifying Muslim spiritual guides in Italian prisons is the non-existence of a formally agreed definition of the term "imam" and its corresponding characteristics: religious and secular authorities in Europe have not still found a general, shared and unequivocal description. The difficulties derive from the individualization of a standardized training curriculum (which is necessary for the acquisition of the title of "Imam") that, if carried out in Europe and not in countries where Islam is the principal religion, can be divisive among the involved stakeholders. This definitory uncertainty complicates the identification and the formalization of this figure in an institutionally recognized role (Ajouaou 2014).

The mentioned difficulties are found in all European prison systems: the procedure for accreditation of Islamic spiritual guides within those institutions has not found univocal and easy consideration and has given rise to very different experiences. Nevertheless, in Europe, some good practices of prison imamship have been developed through the direct involvement of the Islamic community (Adams 2019).

Another unresolved problem concerns the provision of specific places for prayers inside the Italian prison facilities. Each prison has a chapel or a particular area that is intended to be used for Catholic celebrations, while analogous spaces for Muslim prisoners and their collective prayers are present only in the 20.5% of the total number of prisons (only 20.5% of Italian prisons can count on reserved rooms for faiths other than Catholicism; see Antigone 2021).

ELEMENTS THAT FACILITATE RADICALIZATION IN PRISON AND THAT HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE PANDEMIC

In the COVID-19 emergency, some specific elements should be considered as possible variables that could raise the risk of radicalization.

Prison Overcrowding

Prison overcrowding is an element considered dangerous for all the different types of radicalization. An excessive number of prisoners obliged to live in inadequate spaces reduces the possibility of granting their fundamental rights: overcrowding, isolation and a strict security regimen can negatively affect radicalization trajectories (Hamm 2013). The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) working group on Prison and Probation, in a 2016 recommendation, supports this idea by saying that:

a healthy prison environment is a primary deterrent for radicalization. The risks of radicalization are reduced through a professional, secure and fair prison. The absence of these elements can reinforce the extremist mindset and distrust towards authorities, increase the formation of groups and trigger violence (Williams 2016).

The close connection between poor living conditions in places of deprivation of liberty and the risk of radicalization is also deducible from the assertions of King and McDermott (1990). According to their findings, the problematic behaviour of a particular detainee may emerge in one institution and not in another, precisely according to the more or less poor conditions in which s/he is forced to live. However necessary to address the pandemic, such forced and pervasive isolation has demonstrably worsened the daily life of the prison population.

Isolation/Segregation

Isolation/segregation is an element that is considered dangerous for all the different types of radicalization. Detention in isolation is characterized, among other restrictions, by a reduced or even denied involvement in re-educative activities. Normally, this strict isolation or segregation is reserved for specific prisoners, sentenced for the

most serious crimes or viewed as a security threat to the prison itself. These measures represent the exception when dealing with prison discipline and partially justify the limited offer of re-educational activities. Nevertheless, isolation and segregation became the rule during the pandemic period: what was meant only for a small group of supposedly dangerous prisoners had been enlarged to the whole prison population to prevent the COVID-19 contagion. Protecting prisoners' health in the virus emergency seemed to require a necessary suppression of the right to be involved in a re-educative path, which is always based on multi-disciplinary activities that normally include people coming from the outside.

In addition to the suspension of educational programmes, withdrawal of in-person visits with family members has exacerbated the effects of that extreme isolation. The role of the family in P/CVE has been analysed in detail in numerous international documents, including those of the RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network 2018), to highlight positive aspects and possible elements of risk. The emerging picture sees the family as a useful ally in a joint treatment perspective, in that prison workers can rely on family members to understand better the dynamics underlying the radicalization process or the elements of the risk that affect – or could affect – the pathways of intramural radicalization, to prepare efficient P/CVE strategies.

However, critical concerns with visitation are also noted in the literature, mainly related to negative interactions or tensions between the inmate and family members, which could indicate the need to protect the inmate from the family or family members from the inmate. Elements such as the geographical distance of the family from the offender, the impossibility or unwillingness of the family member to be involved in the rehabilitation process, the existence of contact limitations with the relative in prison, or criminal records or drug addiction, alcohol addiction or the commission of crimes by family members, can make it extremely difficult or even impossible to use the family as a support element of P/CVE paths (El-Amraoui and Ducol 2019).

Of course, if the total closure of the prisons has eliminated contact visits with family members and authorized third parties by the competent authority, no better fate has befallen the world of schools, volunteers and operators from outside. However, the principal relevant international available documents (OSCE 2020; Pisiu 2019; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2016) agree that the contribution of the external community, in all its social forms, is indispensable for the formulation of both prevention paths and projects aimed at disengaging extremists.

No Access to External Spiritual Guides

This is an element that is specifically dangerous for religious radicalization. Providing external spiritual guides is one of the first measures to prevent and counter radicalization in prison. The so-called imamship, analogous to the Catholic chaplaincy, is a recent feature of the Italian Prison System and is based on the involvement of Muslim people, generally recognized as religious leaders by the most important religious organizations, with an agreement with the Italian Ministry of the Interior. However, this right is still not granted in each facility and was universally suspended by the pandemic emergency, along with all the other intramural activities. In a similar framework of deprivation, it is easy to understand

how the sudden lack of contact with the spiritual guides who had barely managed to solidify their role inside the prisons may have recreated that vacuum of support and assistance that previously pushed the most fragile prisoners towards the feared do-it-yourself imams with radicalization agenda.

Spiritual guides were excluded from prison, in addition to family members, volunteers and all the personnel who crossed the thresholds of Italian prisons every day: they could no longer govern the correct exercise of the Muslim faith by the prisoners.

It is easy to understand how, if the entry of the spiritual guides – obtained only after a long process of sensitization and understanding of the importance of their role by the prison administration – was considered indispensable to counter the spread of dangerous ideologies, the sudden suspension of this service has left the prison system again in the impossibility of controlling the religious contents transmitted by the most charismatic leaders in the Muslim inmates' daily life and their moments of daily prayer.

In such a vacuum, radical leaders are in an ideal position to exploit the same dynamics of proselytism used externally by extremist groups and based on instrumental interpretations of the weaknesses generated by the global pandemic to promote – undisturbed – their violent ideologies. Even where spiritual guides are available from the free world, there is some risk that such “conversions” may be motivated by a radical or violent agenda rather than by genuinely spiritual reasons; without the careful monitoring conducted by qualified imams, this risk becomes far greater (Ravagnani 2021).

The austerity that has characterized the ongoing pandemic also affects the resources allocated to combatting intramural radicalization, leaving prisons in a situation of heightened and persistent vulnerability. Further, the almost total shift in interest of States from social policies, including disengagement policies, to managing the direct consequences of the pandemic risks creating chronic social inequalities and makes the most fragile population weaker and so more susceptible than ever (Soufan Center 2020).

Suppose social inequalities can leave room for radicalization (Awan 2013; Rink and Sharma 2018). In that case, the pandemic's effects can only aggravate the already problematic penitentiary context, eliminating the chances of reintegration of citizens who have already known violent ideologies, perhaps during long stays abroad as militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces. Although difficult during the pandemic, failure to strengthen reintegration policies can become a dangerous choice between virus protection and the risk of radicalization within prisons.

Suspension of all Rehabilitative Tools

The suspension of all rehabilitative tools is considered dangerous for all types of radicalization. The extreme isolation in which prison inmates were forced to live from March 2020 to almost September 2020 (at that point partially mitigated by the intermittent reopening of intramural activities, according to the improving or deteriorating pandemic fluctuations) has resulted in the effective exclusion of prisoners from all those measures that are normally seen as preliminary to the

application of alternative sanctions. Such steps are indispensable to evaluate prisoners' capacity to desist from crimes or comply with the very restrictive requirements imposed by the competent authority.

Only people serving sentences in a semi-liberty regime were completely removed from the prison regime. After an initial moment of regression that saw them fall back into a full detention regime, they were granted special licences, regularly renewed during the whole emergency period. This condition persists at the time of writing, according to the initial provision contained in Article 124 of Legislative Decree no. 18 of 17 March 2020, periodically extended.

The prisoners who were regularly taking advantage of premium licences or were involved in work activities outside the prison, even in the form of voluntary work for the community, suffered a more restricted regime: for them, the pandemic has resulted in a full return to intramural life. Since restorative justice is an important re-educational tool (introduced in 2018 in the provisions of Article 20 of the Penitentiary Law), it is possible to understand how the pandemic has had a heavy impact on the impoverishment of prisoners' rehabilitation process.

Concerning radicalized prisoners or those at risk of radicalization, some observations on applying restorative justice as a useful tool to prevent and counter these dynamics may be useful. Restorative justice aims to rebuild the social order broken by crime as a widely shared concept. The harmful consequence of criminal action on society is also frequently present in post-terrorist action scenarios, and many European countries have believed that restorative justice could also be a useful tool for managing these particular criminal situations. The classic application of restorative justice (the possibility of avoiding criminal trial or conviction) can hardly be imagined as a possible answer for serious terrorist attacks. Anyway, it can be creatively directed toward useful restorative justice tools such as conference circles to reconstruct social relations within the context in which the dynamics of violent radicalization were generated. The potential preventative effect of restorative justice applied to possible prison radicalization may also be considered in evaluating P/CVE programmes for inside prison facilities. The possibility of actively participating in community life, which radical impulses tend to attack, can offer a first inclusive step, which provides the basis for preventing violent radicalization. If prisoners are not allowed to experiment with similar paths, as in the pandemic, the prison system has lost an important opportunity to reduce recidivism and radicalization (Ruiz Yamuza and Ravagnani 2018).

THE PRISONERS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE RISK OF RADICALIZATION

The pandemic has exacerbated the problems that have characterized the Italian prison system for a long time, effectively preventing the implementation of some suggestions made by a sample of Muslim prisoners interviewed as part of a national research project (Ravagnani and Romano 2017) aimed at analysing the perception of the risk of radicalization in prison among Muslim prisoners. That research questionnaire (which queried 175 Muslim prisoners held in nine different facilities in the Country) included many sections and items aimed at defining the involved prisoners' personal, social and legal variables to evaluate the perceived risk of

radicalization among them. At the specific question “what do you think useful to prevent radicalization in prison”, Muslim prisoners answered as follows:

- (1) To prepare adequate places for prayer inside the prison.
- (2) To offer good religious teaching.
- (3) To allow an imam to enter the prison facility.
- (4) To provide counselling services to foreigners.
- (5) To organize discussion groups for Islamic prisoners.
- (6) To enlarge the possibility of working, studying and meeting families inside the prison.
- (7) To sentence to death terrorists.
- (8) To monitor suspects inside prison.
- (9) To organize discussion groups with prisoners of different faiths.

Analysing what has been suggested by the prisoners, it can be noticed that they are fully aware of the best strategies (apart from the death penalty for terrorists) to reduce the risk of radicalization inside the prison environment and prevent possible inter-faith conflicts between the prisoners themselves. The nine-point list of the needed ingredients confirmed the negative involution of the Italian prison system caused by the pandemic and illuminated the delay in implementing useful services that were already missing even before the pandemic.

The restricted availability of specific places for the celebration of daily prayers, the scarce presence of spiritual guides and the consequent sporadic support offered to Islamic prisoners made these prisoners feel even more vigorously abandoned during the pandemic isolation and frustrated the requests of prisoners of the Islamic faith for equal respect for their religious rights.

The same frustrations happened to the opportunities to work, study and meet families that have been drastically reduced in the attempt to protect prisoners' life from possible COVID-19 contagion: the typical day in prison during the pandemic has been characterized by a total gap of re-educational activities and a large amount of time spent in contact with other detainees, without any additional positive purpose. The desire of these prisoners for the organization of discussion groups between prisoners of different faiths also did not find space for implementation due to the impossibility of letting specialized moderators enter the facilities.

Concerning the suggestion of counselling for a foreign inmate, it must be said that, even before the pandemic, the possibility of meeting cultural mediators was not particularly high: the 19,888 foreign prisoners held in Italian facilities at the end of 2019 (last available data, Ministero della Giustizia 2020) could count only on 176 cultural mediators. The pandemic could only worsen the unavailability of counselling, forcing a longer waiting period to meet such professionals.

AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE ISOLATION: THE PRISON FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (P4HR) PROJECT

To reduce the sense of extreme isolation and to offer prisoners the possibility of continuing being part of external society, the prison administration of the city of

Brescia in Italy decided to reactivate one of the group's activities that, for the last five years, were part of the weekly routine of the prisoners: the Prison for Human Rights (P4HR) project (Ravagnani and Romano 2019). Four years before the advent of the pandemic, the University of Brescia and the Office of the Prisoners Ombudsman of Brescia developed a specific project aimed at the two prison facilities of Brescia and based on the use of human rights education to prevent radicalization and recidivism. The idea for this project was inspired by the United Nations project "The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education" (UNDHRE), promoted by the United Nations from 1995 to 2004. The UNDHRE programme was defined as follows:

Training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitude which are directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, respect, gender equality, and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society;
- (e) The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the Maintenance of Peace. (United Nations 1996)

If "education is . . . an important institution that contributes to cohesion by socializing the new members" (Khan 2016) concerning external society, it appears clear that the definition is even more applicable to the prison environment.

Moreover, Article 26.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations to maintain peace.

In the prison context, characterized by large and sometimes irreconcilable cultural, linguistic and religious differences, the identification of a "common language" becomes fundamental, a sort of "juridical Esperanto" on which to base a training course on the respect of rules, of others, and of social coexistence.

The P4HR project aims to implement human rights education in prison to reduce the risk of radicalization and recidivism and to involve prisoners in protecting human rights in a free society.

Recognizing that time in prison, in most cases, is just a break in the life of a person and that the time spent behind bars should be employed doing activities that can help prisoners to desist from any crime and violence, P4HR International has the following goals:

- Discussing new strategies to increase the rate of resistance among prisoners.

- Preparing new educational tools to discuss human rights in prison.
- Spreading the knowledge of human rights in prison as a common language among people coming from different countries and cultures.
- Involving prisoners, according to each specific judicial situation, in activities for the protection of the human rights of people in need within a free society, from the very first moment they enter the prison.
- Creating a global movement of prisoners around the world that, through the P4HR group and with the help of P4HR members, can feel part of the large family of human rights activists (also through the creation of personal cards and materials that can help them to recognize themselves as part of an international group).
- Reaching relevant stakeholders (e.g. national prison administration, Ministry of Justice) to present the work of the Organization and to ask for possible collaboration.
- Periodically sensitizing public opinion about this initiative to fight prejudice and to enlarge the participation in the P4HR group.

To pursue the targets mentioned above, P4HR members inside prisons are asked to work in strict synergy with free volunteers to develop campaigns, events and global actions. The opportunity to participate in an organized group such as P4HR and to gain a specific role in its organization can help fight the so-called “loss of significance” (Kruglanski et al. 2014) that normally afflicts people in prison and is considered to be one of the alarming factors that can lead to radicalization.

Offering prisoners roles in positive social change efforts can also help to reduce recidivism rates.

The Italian experience has shown that prisoners rarely have the chance to speak about human rights in their own life, and normally they are much more focused on their own rights than ready to think about others. The P4HR group allows them to study and discuss important issues such as immigration, freedom of religion, the right to life in its different perspectives, consequences of using violence, racism and the pains of being victimized.

P4HR will, of course, need more time to achieve ever more reliable outcomes. Nevertheless, the permanent group still working in Italy – the only active group during the most extreme period of total closure of prison facilities able to offer any relief to prisoners – has demonstrated that, in the multicultural complexity of prisons, P4HR can create positive bonding between prisoners and free members of society. Involving detainees in the protection of important human rights initiatives, and giving them the chance to develop and use their skills to make a positive difference in the lives of people in need, will be the constant challenge that P4HR is determined to meet in the coming years.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly presented one of the most serious health emergencies affecting the entire planet since the last world war. Prison systems worldwide have been severely affected and have had to react with stringent

restrictions on activities carried out within the institutions and on contacts with the outside world, requiring extreme isolation countermeasures. Italy has been one of the most severely affected European countries since the very first onset of the pandemic.

The unexpected and virulent storm of infections and deaths forced Italy to modify – or even cancel – all rehabilitative priorities to address the dangers of the pandemic. This included the prison system: in the enormous effort to contain the infections, for such a long period, Italian inmates were forced to communicate with their loved ones only through video or telephone calls before finally being able to resume in-person visits. However, when resumed, face-to-face visits took place through Plexiglas, specially installed to deal with the pandemic emergency, and so did not allow physical embracing or even touching.

Compounding the problem has been the total suspension of internal rehabilitation activities, forcing inmates to spend the entire day in their cells or the corridors of the pods. These severe restrictions increased tensions drastically and led to outbreaks of rioting in some institutions: 13 prisoners lost their lives, many more were injured, and enormous structural damage occurred in the involved institutions.

However, the issue of radicalization under ostensibly religious auspices has largely been ignored, despite international bodies such as the United Nations expressing themselves clearly on the possible correlation between violent, isolated, inadequate prison environments and the increased risk of radicalization (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2016). Although it is understandable that in a situation of such gravity, all the resources and efforts have necessarily been focused on protecting the lives of prisoners, it is essential to recognize that the new anti-virus measures may have negatively affected an already fragile and vulnerable population and led them to find refuge in extremist ideologies.

It is evident that there is now a need for restrictions that cannot yet be eliminated to be allowed to co-exist with the restoration, however gradual, of the re-educational function of criminal sentencing, through the resumption of all the treatment activities that have enhanced the daily life of prisoners since the creation of the Italian penitentiary system.

In addition, a commitment to prevent radicalization must soon include reinstating the important participation of free society in extramural treatment paths that facilitate social reintegration, reduce recidivism risks, and thwart efforts to push prisoners towards violent ideologies.

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TRANSLATED ABSTRACTS

Abstracto

La radicalización en prisión es un campo de investigación bien desarrollado que, particularmente después del 11 de septiembre de 2001, ha involucrado a académicos y profesionales en un intento de resaltar los posibles factores y dinámicas de empuje y atracción, así como estrategias útiles para prevenir y contrarrestar el extremismo. dentro de las instalaciones. Como todo tema de gran interés, ha dado lugar a numerosas teorías sobre los posibles enfoques de la violencia radical, algunas incluso enfrentadas entre sí. Sin embargo, existe un acuerdo casi unánime en que el aislamiento de la sociedad exterior y la gestión inadecuada del derecho a profesar la propia fe religiosa dentro de las cárceles pueden ser elementos que aumenten el riesgo de radicalización intramuros. La pandemia de COVID-19 interfirió fuertemente no solo

en la vida de las personas que pertenecen a la sociedad libre sino también, y quizás aún más, en la vida de los presos, lo que resultó en el aislamiento total de las instalaciones penitenciarias italianas de la comunidad exterior. Los dramáticos esfuerzos para proteger la salud pública han eclipsado todos los demás derechos, incluido, para los presos, practicar la propia fe con la guía de líderes religiosos autorizados. El presente artículo explora cómo y por qué estos cambios antivirales en la gestión de los penitenciaros italianos podrían haber influido en el riesgo de radicalización intramuros.

Palabras clave radicalización Islámica, cárceles, pandemias, derechos humanos

Abstrait

La radicalisation en prison est un domaine de recherche bien développé qui, en particulier au lendemain du 11 septembre 2001, a impliqué des universitaires et des praticiens dans la tentative de mettre en évidence d'éventuels facteurs et dynamiques d'incitation et d'attraction, ainsi que des stratégies utiles pour prévenir et contrer l'extrémisme à l'intérieur des installations. Comme tout sujet de grand intérêt, elle a donné lieu à de nombreuses théories sur les approches possibles de la violence radicale, certaines même en contradiction les unes avec les autres. Cependant, il existe un accord quasi unanime sur le fait que l'isolement de la société extérieure et la gestion inadéquate du droit de professer sa foi religieuse au sein des prisons peuvent être des éléments qui augmentent le risque de radicalisation intra-muros. La pandémie de COVID-19 a fortement interféré non seulement dans la vie des personnes appartenant à la société libre, mais aussi – et peut-être même plus – dans la vie des détenus, entraînant l'isolement total des établissements pénitentiaires italiens de la communauté extérieure. Les efforts spectaculaires pour protéger la santé publique ont effectivement éclipsé tous les autres droits, y compris – pour les prisonniers – pratiquer sa foi sous la direction de chefs religieux autorisés. Le présent article explore comment et pourquoi ces changements antivirales dans la gestion du pénitencier italien ont pu influencer le risque de radicalisation intra-muros.

Mots-clés radicalisation islamique, prisons, pandémies, droits de l'homme

抽象的

监狱中的激进化是一个发达的研究领域,特别是在2001年9月11日之后,学术界和从业人员试图强调可能的推动和拉动因素和动态,以及预防和打击极端主义的有用策略设施内。像每一个非常感兴趣的主体一样,它引发了许多关于激进暴力的可能方法的理论,有些甚至相互矛盾。然而,几乎一致认为,与外部社会隔绝以及在监狱内对信仰宗教信仰的权利管理不善可能是增加校内激进化风险的因素。COVID-19大流行不仅严重干扰了属于自由社会的人们生活,而且甚至可能更多地干扰了囚犯的生活,导致意大利监狱设施与外部社区完全隔离。保护公共健康的巨大努力有效地掩盖了其他所有权利,包括——对于囚犯——在授权的宗教领袖的指导下实践自己的信仰。本文探讨了意大利监狱管理中的这些抗病毒变化如何以及为什么会影响校内激进化的风险。

关键词 : 伊斯兰激进化, 监狱, 流行病, 人权

العمل خص

التطرف في السجن هو مجال بحثي متطور ، لا سيما في أعقاب 11 سبتمبر 2001 ، وقد أشرك الأكاديميين والممارسين في محاولة لتسليط الضوء على عوامل وديناميكيات الدفع والجذب المحتملة ، فضلاً عن الاستراتيجيات المفيدة لمنع التطرف ومكافحته. داخل المرافق. مثل كل موضوع ذي أهمية كبرى ، فقد أدى إلى ظهور العديد من النظريات حول المقاربات المحتملة للعنف الراديكالي ، حتى أن بعضها على خلاف مع بعضها البعض. ومع ذلك ، هناك اتفاق شبه إجماعي على أن العزلة عن المجتمع الخارجي والإدارة غير الكافية للحق في اعتناق العقيدة الدينية داخل السجن قد تكون عناصر تنزيه من خطر التطرف الداخلي. تدخل جائحة Covid-19 بشكل كبير ليس فقط في حياة الأشخاص الذين ينتمون إلى المجتمع الحر ولكن أيضاً - وربما أكثر - في حياة السجناء ، مما أدى إلى عزل مرافق السجن الإيطالية تماماً عن المجتمع الخارجي. لقد طُغت الجهود الهائلة لحماية الصحة العامة بشكل فعال على كل الحقوق الأخرى ، بما في ذلك - بالنسبة للسجناء - ممارسة الحرية لعقيدته بتوجيه من القيادة الدينية المصرح لهم. تستكشف هذه المقالة كيف ولماذا تؤثر هذه التغيرات المضادة للفيروسات في إدارة السجن الإيطالية على خطر التطرف داخل الأعصاب.

الكلمات الدالة: التطرف الإسلامي، سجن، جائحة، حقوق إنسان

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