

Alfredo Cospito Hunger Strike Ends With Partial Victory

Fifth Estate Collective

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Imprisoned Italian insurrectionist anarchist Alfredo Cospito's six-month hunger strike ended in April with a partial victory of a reduced sentence.

Over the past year, Cospito has waged a struggle against the brutality and dehumanization of prison life in Italy. (See "Alfredo Cospito's Struggle," FE #413, Spring 2023). He and his comrade Anna Beniamino were convicted of kneecapping the CEO of Italy's main nuclear power company, and later of planting bombs at a school for Carabinieri, the national police.

In October 2022, after several legal appeals for reducing Alfredo's and Anna's sentences had failed, Cospito began his hunger strike to protest the harsh, life-destroying prison conditions. He also demanded an end to strict solitary confinement and life sentences without parole for any prisoner.

Alfredo's hunger strike gained the attention of several liberal and leftist representatives in the Italian parliament as well as anarchist, leftist, and civil libertarian groups in Italy and internationally.

In December, the judges of the appeals court decided to review the case, but first they requested that the Italian Constitutional Court rule on the legitimacy of sentences without parole and on severe solitary confinement.

For the first six years of a life sentence, Cospito was held in the general prison population, during which time he wrote several insurrectionist articles that were published on the outside.

In order to silence and punish him, in April 2022, the then-Minister of Justice, Marta Cartabia, directed prison staff to subject Cospito to an extremely strict solitary confinement regime (known as 41bis in the Italian criminal code).

In April 2023, the Italian Constitutional court held an emergency review of the issues related to Alfredo's case and ruled that there were valid reasons for challenging sentences of the sort given to him.

Cospito and his defense team felt the constitutional court's rulings and the positive media coverage to be a significant start toward improving prison conditions for all, and especially imprisoned anarchists, communists, and other political prisoners.

As a result, Alfredo decided to suspend his six-month-long hunger strike in order to live longer and continue the struggle.

In June, the appeals court reduced Alfredo's sentence to 23 years and Anna's sentence to 17 years and 9 months imprisonment.

However, as of this writing, Cospito's extremely strict solitary confinement regime remains in place and his contact with the outside world continues to be severely limited.

At the review hearing and afterward, Alfredo stated that he is willing to take responsibility for things he has done, but neither he nor Anna were responsible for the bombs placed outside the Carabinieri school in Fossano.

He further asserted that in the past several years none of the bombs placed by anarchists in Italy have caused any fatalities. The reason is “because the anarchists are not the State,” meaning that they do not intend to spread terror among the general population, but only to publicize issues.

Nevertheless, in June, the Italian government stepped up repression against the massive displays of solidarity that occurred in the past months. Several anarchists in various parts of the country who have participated in demonstrations in support of Alfredo and Anna are being prosecuted on various trumped-up charges.

The State authorities want to punish and break the ties of political solidarity through repression of both those outside and inside the prison walls. Alfredo’s hunger strike is over, but the fight against conditions in the carceral system continues.



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