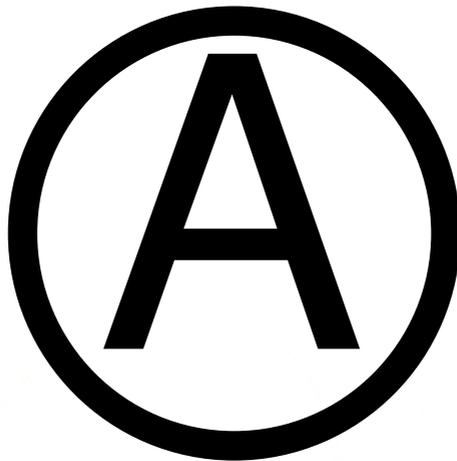


# The role of prisons within society



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Webseite: <http://ka-os-muc.net/>*

Imagine someone takes over control of your life overnight. Most decisions are made by somebody else. Like for example when to eat, when to meet other people – and whom –, if and which books you are allowed to read, and so on. Imagine you are forced to work for about 8 Euros per day and to save part of the money. Imagine there are people you heavily depend on who may beat your ass up whenever they want to – and you can count on it, they will want to – without any consequences for them. Imagine you are ill, but you are only allowed to see a doctor next week at best. This and things much worse are bitter reality for many people worldwide. Day by day, week by week, month by month and for many of them even year by year.

There is talk of prisoners. They exist everywhere all around the globe. In some states there are more, in some states there are less of them, but they are always people who didn't act compliantly with rules of society, quite commonly they are members of marginalized groups. Round about 10 million people worldwide are prisoners (see World Prison Brief 2017) which are 1.3 permille (0.13 percent) of the world's population. But many people finding themselves in situations similar to prisons, for example in some of the many refugee camps, are left out of the statistics.

The situation of prisoners is precarious in every prison! Many citizens' rights of the according state don't apply for prisoners. Even some fundamental human rights are systematically disregarded. A right for physical integrity doesn't exist in prisons: The detention conditions cause illnesses, medical examinations are often possible only a few days later, and the many known cases of brutality against prisoners by the prison staff don't happen by accident. They are an essential element of the repressive prison system. Even the exploitation of the prisoners' working power could hardly be more inhuman: Legal relations don't apply in prisons. The prisoners must work for ridiculously low daily wages (for example about 8 Euros per day) and in many states they won't get paid for their work at all. Besides work necessary to keep the prison's facilities running, many imprisoned have to work for private companies. Those companies willingly benefit from the labor conditions similar to slavery in prisons. Alongside the patronizing through the prison system itself, many prisoners experience sequestration from society. It's not only the existing relationships that are worn down during a longer stay in prison assisted by the prison system itself, but also the negative effects a stay in prison has on future relationships and chances of social participation. In many economic sectors, people who have been in prison won't get hired, many people condemn other people just because they have been in prison once, and some offers of the

public purse aren't available to former prisoners.

All those are not mischiefs, observed only in the prisons of dictatorships known for their inhuman activities. Those are the conditions occurring in German prisons as well as nearly everywhere in the world. Sure, there are qualitative differences between prison systems of different states, but the conditions described above are more or less consensus between all states. There are almost exclusively derivations downwards.

Prisons are obviously institutions of oppression in society as a whole. Even while most people have no idea of the conditions in prisons, they advocate them. Actually there is nothing unusual about people not having any idea about everyday life in prisons while advocating them. Nearly all concrete repressive and violent measures a society endorses for their own (alleged) protection against "the others" proceed behind the scenes. That means there is hardly any reporting and especially no objective reporting about it, it happens apart from the views of society and the victims are often intimidated so that they don't dare to tell anyone about what they have experienced. There are also other means to prevent victims from talking about their experiences. For example people who have been deported can hardly tell the local press about how they were treated. Also prisoners have limited opportunities to tell other people

about their treatment. Reports about mischiefs in prisons often get seized or “lost” on their way outside. Indeed most people don’t have any interest in prisoners and their situation. And when they nevertheless are confronted with the mischiefs of prisons, they often choose to justify those mischiefs talking about “nemesis”, “necessity” or other rubbish.

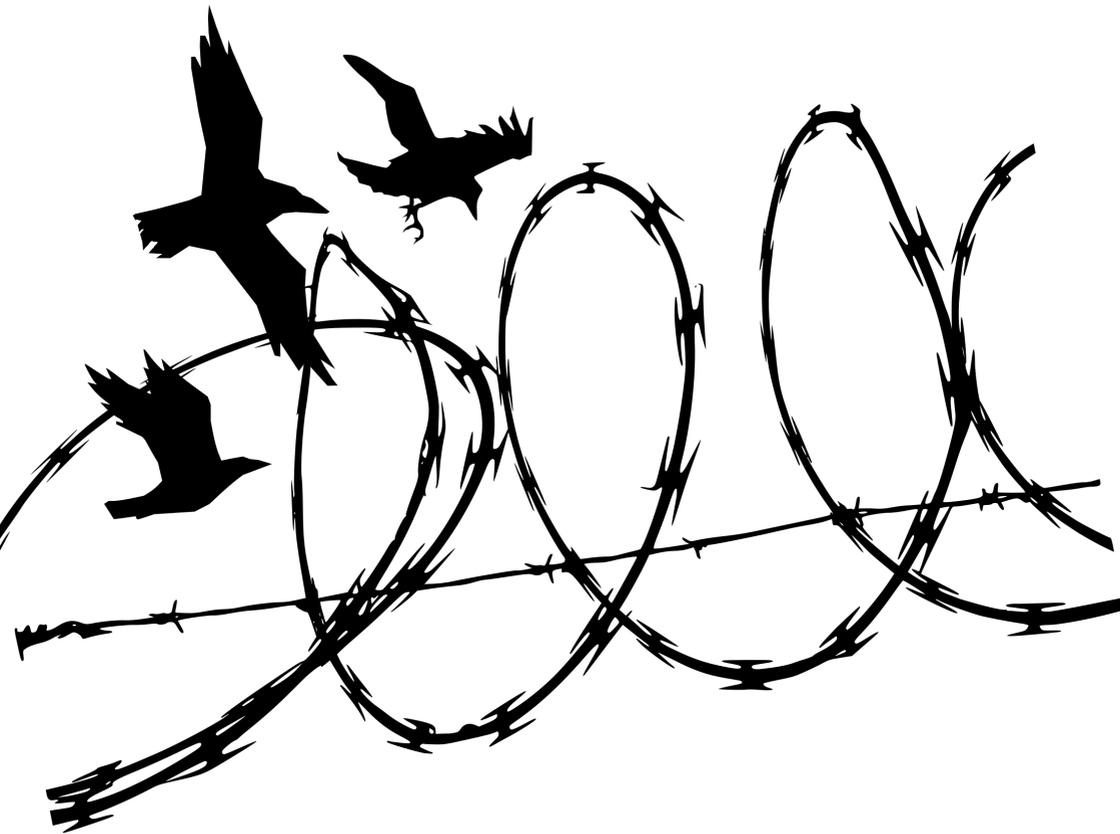
Prisons as a place of “nemesis” don’t contravene the widespread acknowledgment of rehabilitation. In many cases rehabilitation does mean nothing else than persuading a person by compulsion (for example by a stay in prison or by conditions of probation) to act compliant with the rules of the surrounding society. Beside the fact that this is an authoritarian way to normalize the members of society it is obvious that this endeavor must fail for many people: In Germany for instance, many People of Color are excluded from society because of racist ideologies. That is a problem of society as well as an institutional problem. Those people are observed with a greater intensity, they are controlled more frequently, and sometimes they get arrested without any reason. As a consequence People of Color are overrepresented in prisons, which inspires the racist prejudices in society. All in all, you can observe that there is a far bigger amount of imprisoned members of marginalized minorities than the amount of members from the majority society in prisons.

That also gives some indication of the actual role of prisons in our society. They are possibly the state's hardest instrument of violent oppression against non-compliant behavior and a place for all those people abandoned by society at the same time. The purpose of a stay in prison is always to break the imprisoned person and adopt them to the collective identity of society. If that isn't possible, for instance because the person was imprisoned because of racist reasons, the prison becomes the place of destruction for this person: The only object of the violent daily routine in prison is the degradation of the imprisoned person, adapting them to the idea the society got from them. For those people prisons are the place they were expelled to by a society that has (seemingly) no place for them.

**All prisoners are political prisoners!**

**Let's abolish all prisons!**

*We wrote this text on occasion of the global week in solidarity with anarchist prisoners. You can find more information on the campaign's website: <https://solidarity.international>*



**Where there is power,  
there is resistance.**



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