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RECEIVED 17 January 2023
ACCEPTED 26 July 2023
PUBLISHED 13 October 2023

CITATION
Veglio M (2023) The black book on Turin's
pre-removal detention center (CPR). When
legal turns political.
Front. Hum. Dyn. 5:1146300.
doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2023.1146300

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The black book on Turin's pre-removal detention center (CPR). When legal turns political

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The paper describes how NGOs, lawyers' associations and civil society reacted to the suicide of a young man from Guinea while detained in Turin's Pre-Removal Detention Centre (CPR), where migrants are detained for the sole purpose of deportation. Deprivation of freedom without any criminal record entails a legal scandal, something that challenges the rule of law: the limitation of freedom is reserved to non-EU citizens who now come under the jurisdiction of lay judges (Justice of the Peace), despite decisions on personal freedom are exclusively handled by full professional judges. Furthermore, the legal ground for the detention of undocumented migrants is surprisingly fragile and fragmentary, often resorting to mere ministerial circulars where a law should be mandatory. Defying almost 25 years of indifference, silent acceptance and ignorance, the network of activists launched a campaign to shut the CPR down, publishing the Black Book on Turin's CPR and raising the public attention against the segregation of migrants through individual accounts and lived experiences.

KEYWORDS

immigration, detention, asylum, storytelling, deportation, human rights, lawyering, advocacy

Introduction

At the center of the crowd occupying the square in front of the Turin Prefecture stands a long line of women and men in black. They stand like trees along a roadside, motionless and obstinate, in a silence heavy with anger. It is sultra early June afternoon, but the lawyers are wearing their toga.

Although the demonstration was called a week earlier, the turnout is significant: 120 associations nationwide, several 100 participants. It is the first time in 20 years that the debate on foreign national deportation centers in Italy has exceeded the specialists' niche and reached the community, gaining media attention and shaking off the usual torpor of public opinion.

Lawyers parade, first in silence, then shouting into microphones their bitter indignation at the suicide of a young Gambian boy while in the Turin Centro di Permanenza per i Rimpatri (CPR). He died at the hands of the State, when his level of protection should have been the highest. The denunciation is punctuated by slogans and eloquent signs: "The CPR is a wound in the rule of law", "Abuse of psychotropic drugs", "Frequent acts of self-harm", "Unofficial isolation cells", "The CPR in Turin is illegal and must be closed".

In the city's central square, a challenge is launched against the authorities' silence on the CPR. The center is a black hole that swallows up those detained and pushes them to the edge of legality; an inaccessible and secluded place, an airport boarding area turned into a maximum security prison.

Together with the bodies of the detainees, the CPR hides incredible stories of pain and humiliation, which often leave no trace. This is why the protesters distribute a pamphlet of about 20 pages, dense and unequivocal, an indictment against the ferocity of the authorities assembled over five days and nights of furious writing.

The black book on Turin's CPR

The Black Book was written after the suicide of Moussa Balde, a 22-year-old boy who was attacked on 9 May 2021 in the streets of Ventimiglia by three unknown men. After being briefly hospitalized, the young man was taken to the Head of Police of Imperia, which ordered his confinement at the CPR of Turin in order to deport him. At the CPR he was placed in solitary confinement and was found dead on 23 May 2021.

Testimonies of the everyday ferocity that pollutes the structure of the detention center describe a dehumanizing context, where serious deficiencies in services, illegitimate use of isolation, humiliation, use of psychotropic drugs “by the liter” and self-harm are the order of the day (Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic, 2012; *Medici per i diritti umani*, 2012). Asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, people under 18, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, drug addicts are imprisoned in overcrowded and distressing spaces, even with subjects considered socially dangerous, in a condition of sustained precarity. The control over the daily life of the detainees is all-encompassing: personal telephones are withdrawn at the entrance and the right to communicate with the outside is only theoretical. The rooms lack the light switch, operated centrally by the staff; the right to have meals seated at a table is not guaranteed; each room has a bathroom but between the beds and services there is no door or any element that ensures a minimum of intimacy. Health care is severely deficient, the degradation of the ambulatory poses a serious risk of spread of contagious diseases. Here, in the Brunelleschi center, people walk on the edge of a gorge.

Four cases of everyday savagery

It was in order to document the everyday savagery of the Brunelleschi center that, along with others, I collaborated on the Black Book. Four cases reported in the Black Book convey the degree of brutality that has become habitual in such centers, cases which have fueled, and must continue to fuel, activists' response.

H. O.

H.O. is a young Tunisian man who arrived in Lampedusa on 20 October 2020 with a gunshot wound in his right foot. During the quarantine period on the ship *Rhapsody*, the Red Cross noted that “on physical examination, multiple painful healed wounds are seen on the right foot. Impossible to remove anything contained in the wounds”. Beyond causing him constant pain, the numerous bullets lodged in his leg prevented H.O. from walking properly. Nevertheless, at the end of the quarantine period, H.O. received a deportation order and a detention order at the CPR in Turin, where he was confined on 4 November 2020. The young man expressed his wish to apply for international protection in Italy in front of the Justice of the Peace (*Giudice di pace*). During the visits in the weeks following his detention, the lawyer noted that H.O.'s condition was getting worse, to the point of being unable to walk and having to be accompanied in a wheelchair. The man informed his lawyer that in the living unit to which he had been assigned he

was not allowed to use a wheelchair or crutches and was therefore forced to spend the whole day sitting or lying down, having even to rely on the help of his fellow detainees to use the toilet. On 24 November 2020, H.O. was invited for a personal interview before the Asylum Determination Commission of Turin. However, the management of the center, without warning the Commission, did not provide the necessary means to accompany him and the young man was unable to attend the interview. The Commission, urged by the lawyer, contacted the authorities, who then clarified that they had not taken H.O. to the appointment due to the difficulty in transporting him in a wheelchair. A new call for the interview came only the following month, on 28 December 2020, after the CPR doctor had certified that H.O. was unable to walk, and this time the man was accompanied to the Commission's offices. During subsequent interviews, the lawyer noted that H.O.'s right leg was constantly shaking and that the young man was unable to control its movement. He also reported that H.O. had been examined by the medical staff of the CPR and had undergone the extraction of some bullets in the center ambulatory. Indeed, the lawyer, after having checked H.O.'s medical report under the strict visual control of the center management, learned of an operation for the extraction of some bullets carried out in the ambulatory center, a place that lacks the basic sanitary conditions for such an operation. In light of the absence of a specialist examination and the obvious deterioration in his health conditions, on 5 January 2021 H.O.'s lawyer asked the Prefecture to authorize the entry of a surgeon and an urgent check-up at a hospital. The request was not answered. H.O. was detained for 202 days before he could receive proper surgery to remove some of the dozens of lead shrapnel lodged in his foot. Despite further reminders, it was not until 11 February 2021 that H.O. was taken to the University Hospital of the City of Health and Science of Turin for a specialist examination. The doctor who visited him promptly requested an X-ray of his right foot, which on 23 February 2021 revealed the presence of several dozen bullets and the need for surgery. On the same day, H.O.'s lawyer went to the CPR to examine his client's medical records and specialist examination reports, as agreed with the manager of the center. But, once arrived at the center, the lawyer was informed that access to the files was not possible at that time. On the basis of the X-ray results, the lawyer requested the immediate release of H.O. into the community, but the request, once again, was not answered. However, the young man was finally released and placed in a reception center for asylum seekers.

In the following weeks, H.O. underwent further specialist checks and drug treatment while awaiting his surgery, and was able to walk again on crutches. On 14 April 2021, H.O. was admitted to the Orthopedic Trauma Center (CTO) in Turin, where he was discharged after more than a month, on 25 May 2021, following several operations to remove the bullets and reconstruct the tissues. His detention inside Turin's CPR lasted for a total of 202 days. Now, new tests and a long physiotherapy await him.

K. K.

K.K., a Tunisian citizen, lived in Italy from 2011 to 2017, obtaining a residence permit for work, a good job and a more than decent salary. In 2017, during a holiday in Tunisia, he was involved

in a serious car accident which caused him permanent injuries: after four surgeries, his right arm and right leg were deformed. According to the CPR doctor, K.K. should be permitted “to walk with crutches and be assisted by people, which is not allowed”. K.K. would be detained for six further weeks without crutches or assistance. Since his residence permit had expired, and despite his physical disability, K.K. tried on several occasions to return to Italy, most recently on 6 November 2020. During the forced quarantine on the GNV La Suprema ship 9, K.K. was examined by a doctor of the Italian Red Cross, according to whom the migrant “reported numerous osteosynthesis surgeries on his pelvis, right femur and right knee; he also presented deformities in his forearm, compatible with pseudoarthrosis.

At the E.O., evident surgical scars and lameness in the right lower limb, with consequent pain in the contralateral lower limb from overload. In relation to the clinical history and anamnesis it is considered worthy of further specialist examination”. But this specialist examination never took place. Once disembarked from the quarantine ship, K.K. immediately received an order of removal from Italy and another order of detention at the CPR of Turin. Here K.K. applied for international protection and asked the case worker who interviewed him, among other things, if he could “talk to the person in charge of the CPR to get me the crutches”. In fact, from the moment of his entry into the center, K.K. had not received any aid in walking and he was forced to be painfully supported by his roommates to use the toilets. On 10 December 2020, the doctor on duty at the CPR of Turin reported that K.K. “should walk with a loaded carry and be assisted by aids, which are not allowed in the center. He has real difficulties in walking”. As a consequence of the center’s prohibitions he was not given crutches, but, on the contrary, he was detained for another month and a half. On the evening of 26 January 2021, K.K. was released from Turin’s CPR. Although he awaited a response from the Asylum Determination Commission of Turin, and he was in an evident condition of vulnerability, he was not granted accommodation in the national reception system for asylum seekers. On the contrary, he was released onto the street. K.K. reached the Porta Nuova railway station, where he met a fellow countryman who, noticing his difficulties, paid for a night in a room of a small hotel.

Y. M.

Y.M. is a Tunisian young man who arrived in Lampedusa together with K.K. and was also forced to quarantine on the GNV La Suprema ship. The visit by the doctor of the Red Cross revealed that “The young man had evident surgical scars on the lower left side of the neck and left side. He reported that he had had previous surgery for cancer not otherwise specified. Further diagnosis and follow-up is recommended”. Also in this case, the diagnostic report was not performed. Having disembarked from the ship, Y.M. received an order of removal and another order for detention at the CPR of Turin, where he was locked up on 23 November 2020.

To the Justice of the Peace, Y.M. declared “I have blood cancer, I had three surgeries for treatment. I suffer from Leukemia”. Y.M.’s lawyer requested “an appropriate assessment to be carried out in order to establish the existence of the alleged pathology and the compatibility of this latter with the

confinement, making the decision on the validation of the detention subject to this examination”. Without ordering any further medical investigation, the judge validated the detention order “in view of the certificates of suitability for both detention and quarantine”, which, however, recommended an in-depth diagnostic examination. In the following days, Y.M.’s lawyer received health documentation issued by Tunisian doctors certifying the existence of a chronic hematological disease requiring regular examinations and treatment. The documentation was immediately forwarded to the CPR managing body, and was acquired as part of Y.M.’s medical records on 1 December 2020. However, it was not until 23 December 2020 that the same documentation was evaluated by a doctor on duty at the CPR, who decided not to prescribe any medical check until 29 December 2020, when a “complete blood test with lymphocyte formula and lymphocyte typing” was finally requested. On 8 January 2021, while awaiting the results of the examination, Y.M.’s lawyer received a new certificate from a Tunisian doctor, which was promptly communicated to the detention authorities, attesting that the young man had been suffering from Hodgkin’s lymphoma since 2013, that he had been treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy until 2015, with a relapse in 2016, and was currently under surveillance. Y.M. has to be monitored for leukemia. He remains locked up for 49 days before a decision is made to release him on medical grounds. On the same day, the doctor on duty at the CPR, having taken note of the results of the hemochrom, stated that “in the opinion of the hematology specialist consulted, further hematological diagnostics would be useful to check for a lympho-proliferative disorder” and then ordered Y.M.’s release. Forty-nine days have passed since Y.M. entered detention, waiting for a medical check requested on several occasions by the young man, his lawyer and the Red Cross during his initial quarantine. Although Y.M., like K.K., was awaiting the outcome of the Asylum Determination Commission of Turin, and also suffered from a serious pathology, on 11 January 2021 the young man was released from detention and left on the street. A CPR mediator, on his own initiative, gave him 20 Euros. Y.M. did not speak Italian and was not familiar with Turin, so he did not know where to go and he ended up spending the night at Porta Susa train station; the next morning he went to the Prefecture of Turin to claim access to the reception measures to which he was entitled.

T. A.

T.A. arrived in Turin’s CPR from Pisa, where he was living with his elder brother. At the hearing for the validation of his detention, T.A. declared himself to be a minor, but the Justice of the Peace validated the measure due to the absence of “elements of certainty about the detainee’s minor age”, although the law establishes exactly the opposite, that is, in case of doubt, the presumption of minor age. T.A.’s appearance and behavior, together with some Tunisian documents in his possession, raised doubts in the Turin Police Headquarters that he was a minor. However, instead of reporting him to the competent Juvenile Public Prosecutor’s Office and placing him in a “first reception center for minors”, as required by the law, T.A. was taken to the University Hospital Città della Salute e della Scienza in Turin. Here, without a psycho-social interview and without the involvement of a pediatrician or another specialist

or a psychologist, the youth was subjected to an X-ray examination of his left wrist and hand and an orthopantomography. Exclusively on the basis of these X-ray, a medical report was drawn up, according to which T.A. was “estimated to be 20 (twenty) years old plus or minus 1 year”. The Police Headquarters then forwarded the report to the Prosecutor’s Office at the Juvenile Court of Turin, which filed an appeal in front of the Juvenile Court of Turin for the adoption of the age assessment decree. The decision to maintain the detention of T.A. despite the pending age determination procedure is contrary to the legislation. To give chapter and verse, the law requires the “Presumption of minor age pending the age determination procedure and in case of doubtful outcome of this procedure” (art. 7, D.P.C.M. 234/16). According to this provision, pending verification of age, “all administrative and criminal proceedings resulting from identification as an adult shall be suspended until a decision is taken” (art. 5, para. 9, L. 47/17). Following which provision in turn, “pending the outcome of the identification procedures, the reception of the minor is guaranteed by the special facilities of first reception for minors provided for by law” (art. 19-bis, par. 2, Legislative Decree 142/15). Circular no. 3431/17 of 18.08 2017, issued by the Piedmont and Aosta Valley Prosecutor’s Office for Minors, further states that, “Until, therefore, this process is concluded (by a decision on a complaint, or by the expiry of the time limits for challenging the decision of the Court) the person who has declared himself to be a minor will be considered to be as such, even in the face of a medical finding to the contrary”. Having learnt of the existence of an age verification procedure, T.A.’s lawyer requested his client’s immediate release and placement in a first reception facility for minors. The authorities did not reply to this request and the Justice of the Peace who assessed the case extended T.A.’s detention several times because “the necessary checks had already been carried out on the minor/major age of the detainee, who was found to be 20-21 years old”, although there was no decree from the Juvenile Court of Turin. For T.A., the detention experience was devastating: he expressed to his lawyer his bewilderment and perplexity for the conditions in which he was forced to live, alone, together with adults and without reference figures. The contacts with his brother were occasional as T.A.’s mobile phone had been confiscated by the detention authorities, and it was not possible to call him inside the center as the Police Headquarters refused to provide the number of the telephones installed inside detainees’ living units, which were often also malfunctioning. The doctors of the CPR reported that T.A. “complains of depression and insists on declaring himself a minor”. Despite the fact that he had been prescribed an anxiolytic therapy, the young man was so distressed that he went so far as to cut himself on the left arm. On 12 May 2021, after 95 days of detention, the center’s doctor noted a “discomfort from reactive anxiety to psycho-somatic symptomatology” and a “reactive anxiety and psychosomatic symptomatology that are expressed in a condition of psycho-emotional vulnerability”. He concluded that “a prolonged exposure to the current restrictive environment could compromise [T.A.’s] psychophysical state and affect his future experience and health status”. Although he should be considered a minor, the police and various judges of peace placed and kept T.A. in detention for 95 days. His psycho-emotional distress leads him to self-harm. The young man was finally released from detention, but not even at this point did the authorities

accompany him to a first reception center for minors. Instead, once out of the CPR, T.A. found himself on the sidewalk of via Santa Maria Mazzarello”.

Daily self-harm

T.A.’s act, in cutting himself on his left forearm out of desperation, is not an isolated one. Indeed, the episodes of self-harm inside Turin’s CPR represent a daily reality, which is constantly hidden by the institutions. In the past few months alone, several acts of self-harm have taken place among detainees, especially among Tunisian citizens, most of whom entered detention immediately after their arrival on Italian shores. Such cases must be documented.

A.F., for example, went on a severe hunger strike: in one month he lost 17 kilograms, could no longer walk, could barely speak and spent all his time lying on the mattress. He also went on a thirst strike, fainted several times and with his remaining energy still managed to injure his left arm. On 6 November 2020, A.F.’s lawyer consulted his medical records and managed to see him one last time. Two days later, A.F. got deported.

E.M. is a 21-year-old Egyptian asylum seeker. At the end of the hearing to validate his detention, the representative of the Head of Police approached him and put his arm around his neck: “do you promise to the lawyer that from now on you will be a good boy?” Left alone with his lawyer, the young man lifted the sleeves of his sweatshirt, revealing many cuts—some already sewn, others still open—on both arms. Shortly after entering the CPR, E.M. began to injure himself on his arms, legs and abdomen. On at least two occasions he swallowed razor blades and stylus batteries. E.M. was taken to the Martini hospital five times in 11 days for his self-harming acts. From the hospital, once the wounds were sewn up, he was discharged and punctually sent back to detention, where he was placed in solitary confinement. After a fight with five police officers in the CPR, E.M. was arrested. The judge for preliminary investigations validated E.M.’s arrest, but rejected the measure of pretrial detention because of his condition of vulnerability and his “particular psychological suffering”.

H.A.K. a 46-year-old man and father of three children aged 9, 5 and 4, embarked from Zawiya, Libya. When he arrived in Lampedusa, he was quarantined on the GNV Allegra ship, where he expressed his will to apply for international protection in Italy. On his Red Cross form it is reported that “the man is afraid of being returned to Tunisia and asks for help in order to avoid it”, and the same form calls for “the competent authorities [to deal with.] the legal issue”. However, after landing in Messina, H.A.K. was not allowed to apply for asylum, but was notified of a removal order from Italy and consequently detained at the CPR Turin. There, H.A.K. finally managed to apply for international protection, but despite the undue obstacle to the asylum procedure he had encountered, his detention was extended several times, leaving him in a state of helplessness. On the evening of 5 February 2021, after 84 days of imprisonment, H.A.K. violently fractured his left leg. The hospital discharge report mentioned an “episode of psychomotor agitation”, a “trauma of the left leg against the edge of the wall” and “inconsolable crying”. H.A.K. told his lawyer, without looking him in the eye, that he broke his leg by slipping on the

floor. B.B.A., who is currently sitting in a wheelchair, also complains of an accidental fall, or rather two falls, within a short distance of each other.

As a result of these falls, he injured his leg and buttock. B.B.A. has a degree in computer science and applied for international protection in Italy to escape the homophobic discrimination he experienced in Tunisia. The Asylum Determination Commission rejected his request, but in order not to risk remaining in the CPR for up to 12 months (Art. 6, Legislative Decree 142/15), B.B.A. chose not to appeal against the decision. The detention went on for other months until B.B.A., exhausted by the weight of segregation, injured himself twice, just before being deported. The list of reactions “instigated” in the CPR Turin is an endless one, of which only a few episodes are known: A.M. fractured his right hand twice within a few weeks, M.R. swallowed the battery of his mobile phone, other people detained fractured their bones by violently hitting against concrete walls. J.M., locked up in the CPR in October 2020, immediately appeared in pain, agitated, crying and complaining of breathing problems. In the following days the situation worsened: besides cutting himself on his arm, he sewed his lips twice and tried to hang himself.

U. M., who was detained in the summer of 2020, came to the interview with his lawyer in a state of apathy. Entering the examination room, still standing, he turned around and lifted his shirt showing that a large part of his back was burnt and the surface layer of the skin was already peeling. “He heated the oil using electrical cables recovered from who knows where”, a police officer commented.

The legal shape of disquiet

Nothing like the administrative detention of foreigners—the jailing of immigrants—reveals the feeling of a community toward the stranger. The migrant is historically presented as an agent of disturbance, a source of insuperable anxiety, which has often been responded to with distrust, rejection and forced removal (Curi, 2010; Boochani, 2018; Mbembe, 2019). In the version of this representation, domesticated and rewritten by the rule of law, hostility toward the other is manifested through norms of territorial defense, of control and limitation of entry and residence, of filing, expulsion and interdiction. The production of legislation is, moreover, a matter of sentiment: the legislator is merely the elective interpreter of common feeling, the institution that translates into formal acts the drives, beliefs, and fears of the community that expresses it. Pre-removal detention camps are thus the legal shape of politically generated disquiet (Agier, 2014). The constantly evaded issue in debates on immigration detention, however, is that detention does not work (Augusti et al., 2017). Jailing foreigners for the purpose of removal, as has become normal in the West in the new millennium, is a legal and economic scandal. For Italy it means, every year, spending hundreds of millions of euros to repatriate a few thousand people. And yet, at the level national politics, debate is limited to the extension or reduction of the maximum duration of detention. This is a matter of great importance for those who find themselves detained in a center, but totally irrelevant in relation to the effectiveness of the measure. The stability, which is to say, continued minimal rate of repatriation of detained persons

is striking and, above all, does not depend in any way on the maximum terms of detention.

Analysis of the data, and the voices of many immigrants, provide an unambiguous reading: without the will of the foreigner, especially if he or she is a citizen of a non-EU country, repatriation is only ever an occasional result. Over the past 15 years, immigration has risen to the top of the European political agenda and has become the subject of enormous media exposure, with a corresponding allocation of public funds. Still, between 2013 and 2017 the Italian authorities repatriated just 20 per cent of all non-EU foreigners subject to a removal decree (28,000 out of 145,000) and only 50 per cent of the 3–6,000 detained per year (Garante nazionale, 2018). In the following years, before and during the pandemic, figures dropped.

Even from the angle of simple efficiency, people’s choice has to center stage: emigrating, returning, investing are complex and multifactorial decisions, in the face of which prohibitionism is a failure, as well as enormously deleterious. Those who cannot or do not want to return are willing to endure imprisonment—even for many months, even in terrible conditions—in order to retain the chance to stay in Europe. If it will not ensure a space for people’s self-determination, the policy of detention and forced removals will continue to produce economically poor results alongside acute human suffering.

It is, however, precisely the economic inefficiency of the detention that illuminates the authentic nature of the CPR: rather than an antechamber to repatriation, the center is a place dedicated to the isolation and exclusion of foreigners through a process of social selection. Administrative detention is the result of a rite of separation on an ethnic basis—an act of apartheid (Veglio, 2020)—whose normative protocol provides for an officiant, being the judicial authority, a function, being the celebration of the hearing, and witnesses at the judge’s desk, which is to say the public authority, the interpreter and the defense lawyer. An inescapable dilemma presents itself to the third of these actors: to accept the center’s rules and fight using laws and norms, or to refusing the system and the stain of complicity. Neither option comes without hazard.

A grin of unwanted complicity

A brutally honest statement sums up the Italian situation: in challenging administrative detention, violence from detainees—against themselves or the facilities—proved much more effective, albeit at an individual level, than public campaigning. It is a bitter, though accurate, statement, hard to swallow for those who refuse, on principle, to resort to violence. The stubborn determination from authorities to refuse reconsideration of the policy of detention lies at the root of this truth, as does the ultra-conservative case-law from 1st instance judges: over 95 per cent of decisions in Turin’s center favors police over migrants, i.e. detention over release (Mastromartino et al., 2017). However, the lawyers showing off their toga on a torrid afternoon in Turin do share a common belief in the rule of law, in the legal system as the driver of change rather than a mere spectator. It is not a theoretical and abstract belief, but the reasoned conclusion of a daily struggle against the constant deception by local judges reduced by the system to yes men.

Affirming the rights of foreigners today, in the West, carries the seed of a civil resistance, of a political vanguard. Driving this resistance is the desire for a future in which closeness, curiosity and respect will prevail against suspicion and subalternation. The legislation that established the CPR resembles transitional justice without the justification of war, unless one considers the fight against human mobility unilaterally declared by the West to be such. The pre-removal detention center is a paradoxical place, a legal enclave within the national territory that subverts the relationship between rule and exception: personal freedom, ordinarily inviolable, yields to the state's claim to segregate and exclude from community life. And this not by virtue of a criminal charge or conviction, but solely on the basis of an administrative violation, entry or residence without a permit. The battle for the cancellation of administrative detention—the question how can we change it?—must not obscure an even more urgent question: how can we continue with it? The will to exclude one part of society jeopardizes the future of all: what coexistence is possible after the camp? Will the victims be able to forgive the offense? The investigation of the suicide of Moussa Balde paved the way for a deeper examination of the numerous blatant violations denounced by The Black Book, which is said to have been on the local Prosecutor's desk for months. Despite the seriousness of the accusations included in the pamphlet, not a single denial against it has been publicly prompted by the authorities. As the charges from the Prosecutor's Office against police representatives, the managing body, high ranking personnel and the medical staff worsened—turning from incitement to suicide to manslaughter and including the ill treatment of many detainees—only some of the victims are ready to claim their justice. Some are scared, others prefer not to show up, most of them are nowhere to be found, unaware—and possibly surprised—of their brand new status of “State victim”. CPR is a place that induces the will to be forgotten.

For any visitor, the exit from the center, coincides with a surprising ritual. On entry, rigidity and slowness reign—handing over documents, waiting, checking, noting in the entry register, waiting again (Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic, 2018)—in an atmosphere of subtle alertness, often deep unease. The exit reverses the procedural ambiance: the police guard in the sentry post opens the door, looks through the glass and smiles, often with a nod of understanding. It is as if the visit to the center had brought us together, had made us both repositories of a secret, on the borders of the licit and the obscene. It is an innocent smile that the guard offers me, but the absurdity of the CPR turns it into a grin of unwanted complicity. We have become intimate because we both know, we have seen. Here lies the root of a great disquiet.

Excerpts from “Fleeing misery, seeking refuge in Italy, being destroyed by the state: when Europe denies the human. The

Black book on the Pre-Removal Detention Centre (CPR) of migrants in Turin—Corso Brunelleschi”, https://en.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/asgi_cpr_turin_en.pdf.

The report has been drafted thanks to contributions from Ornella Fiore, Carla Lucia Landri, Laura Martinelli, Sara Martinetto, Irene Pagnotta, Giovanni Papotti, Gianluca Vitale, under the supervision of the author of this manuscript.

The author thanks ASGI and all the contributors to the Black Book for permission to reuse the report.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not required for the study involving human data in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The case studies included are already in the public domain.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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