

Dear Selahattin,

I write to you today, as the days of your detention near 2000. It hurts to think about the enormity of this number, it hurts to know that you have not been freed and that the legal proceeding against you have not been terminated, despite the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in your favour.

And so, this is how it is in Turkey, one can be arrested, prosecuted and convicted for using one's own words. People get arrested, prosecuted and convicted for their own life journey, a journey which far from being criminal, is about the intellect, ideas, the ability to share, support, study.

The "evidence" they claim to have confirming your guilt, consists largely of your public speeches and the words you have spoken that have been reported by the media... not criminal activities but words. For those of us, who make of words a profession, words are everything, and those who accuse us because of our words know this very well.

Such people know that every word that has been thought, written, recited, spoken represents us. Such people know that to defend those words, we are ready to sacrifice a lot, maybe too much. My situation cannot be compared to yours but somehow, I too live a life in detention.

I have been living under police protection for 15 years because the Camorra, a brutal Italian criminal organization, which since the publication of my book Gomorrah in 2006 have made death threats against me. The Camorra threatened me because of the words I wrote, words that told the world about its criminal activities. Over the years, I have often been asked, whether I regretted my words. And I always replied that I am not a hero, that I never wanted to be, that I only wrote what I thought was right to write and that if I had known what I was going to experience, I might not have done it. I want to be honest with you, all the way.

I don't know if, knowing everything I know today, I would have done it again, but to have confirmation that the criminal organizations fear the story - the word! – more than weapons, this is an awareness from which there is no turning back. This is the cornerstone around which my life revolves: the power of the word, of civil commitment, of public condemnation, of the defence of those who have no voice.

My dear Selahattin, maybe you know Giordano Bruno, a Dominican friar who lived in the sixteenth century, maybe you have heard of him or you have studied his work. He is a philosopher from my country, and I am very proud of this territorial proximity. It is to him that I turn when I question whether the sufferings I have experienced have been worth it. On 17 February 1600, Giordano Bruno was taken to Campo de 'Fiori in Rome, stripped naked in the middle of the public square and burned alive on a bundle of wood. Where he was burned, today stands a bronze statue that looks at us even when we try to ignore it. But I can't ignore it, so every time I look up, the statue seems to tell me: "Look what happens to a man who talks!"

Bruno understood that all men are made of the same substance; moreover, that even the universe, of which we are only a very small part, is made of the same substance, with the only rule of harmonizing itself in the infinite diversities and infinite possibilities. Imagine this wonderful symphony of freedom and the fear it generates in any power that wants to centralize, control, delimit the boundaries of reasoning and block with walls the territory of your own being. These

infinite worlds - ethical, political, social, human - are truths that die as soon as you stop defending them, as if when you stop defending them, right and freedom die too.

The Church would have saved Giordano Bruno's life if only he had abjured, if only he had denied his infinite worlds. But he did not abjure, although he deeply loved life, because his truths, had he denied them, would have been extinguished. Then he had no choice but to die. When I feel discouraged, it is to Giordano Bruno to whom I turn, it is he who tells me that the truths I fight for, will die if I stop defending them.

You, dear Selahattin, have told us about life, the life behind the headlines in Turkey, and you have stood firm in the defence of your words. Even as they try to deprive you of your liberty, you have not accepted to remain silent. Even though you are imprisoned, your words continue to cry out for freedom, and indeed, they do so with even more vigour. And so, here I am writing to you so that my words can walk alongside yours.

I hope to be able to hug you soon, a free man.

With affection, closeness and respect,

[Roberto Saviano](#)