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PRESS RELEASE

BEHIND BARS: MEN OR MONSTERS

ITALY

Modena, May, 14th 2005

“Behind bars: men or monsters” is the theme of the event about the death penalty that will take place in **Modena, Italy, on Saturday, May 14th 2005.**

The event is patronized by the city of Modena.

This day will firstly see an anti – death penalty **demonstration** that will start at “ Piazza Roma” at 3.30 p.m.; it will be opened by Mrs. Francesca Maletti, Social Politics’ Alderman. Then the procession will move along the streets of Modena’s centre.

At the end of the rally, there will be a **conference**, at 6.00pm. in “Piazza Matteotti”, opened by the Mayor of the city, Mr. Giorgio Pighi.

Many people, Italian and international associations wrote letters to the Mayor, expressing their support to this event. For example Paul Rogeau Board, Rete Lilliput, Texas Coalition Against Death Penalty, Italian Coalition Against Death Penalty, Karl Guillen Board, Nazim Hikmet Association, Sr. Helen Prejean, Journey of Hope, National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, New Jerseyans Against Death Penalty, Coalition for Truth and Justice, Tennessee Coalition Against State Killing, Daria Bignardi, Marco Cinque.

This day has been organized by three Italian citizens, Cecilia Negri, Katia Rabacchi e Monica Licata; they have been dealing with the death penalty for years, writing also to death row inmates.

PROGRAM

The Conference aims to have people think about the reality of the death penalty, especially as it concerns the United States, through the experiences of different speakers, both Italian and American.

Chiara Silva, member of the Italian Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, will speak about her correspondence with death row inmates, whom she visits periodically. In May 2002 she witnessed the execution of her friend Johnny Martinez – Texas.

Dave Atwood, president of the Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty, will give a general idea on what the death penalty means and will show the reasons why it should be abolished .

The next to intervene will be **Bill Pelke**, a victim relative, nephew of Ruth Pelke who was killed in 1985 in the state of Indiana by Paula Cooper.

Founder of the Journey of Hope, he has been cooperating with many anti- death penalty organizations, such as The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, being also elected abolitionist of the year.

Shujaa Graham, released from California death row in 1981, will offer his thought about the death penalty, from the point of view of a man who lived for four years waiting for his execution. Found innocent, he was then freed.

The conference will end with **Magdaleno Rose Avila's** intervention; he is the Homies Unidos founder, an association run by gang members who are searching for an alternative to violence. With Sister Helen Prejean, he founded the Moratorium Campaign.

The journalist **Marco Cinque** will read some poems written by death row inmates.

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