

Iñaki de Juana Chaos

Personal Prison History

1 - Arrested 16th January 1987

I was tortured for 10 days in the police station, this would have been in the main police head quarters in Madrid. I was arrested at 0500 from my bed, in a flat where I was staying. The special forces police broke the door down, and trailed me out of bed in my underwear. As soon as they reached me in the flat it was pure violence all the way to the police station. I was arrested and hand cuffed and was beaten up. I was beaten in the flat and then not taken to a police station, but rather was taken to a mountain. (Inaki becomes very emotional and tearful and does not want to discuss what happened at the mountain or in the police station.)

2 - Between January and September 1987 I was on remand and had my first trial in September 1987, and duly convicted and became a sentenced prisoner. The first prison that I was in Carabanchel, which is in Madrid, 500 km from the Basque country. The policy for Basque prisoners is to keep moving prisoners from prison to prison and in accordance with this policy that I was shifted. Carabanchel was the first place I was brought after my torture in the police station. It was a facility (in those days) that prisoners were brought to, to recover from the beatings and torture prior to being moved on to the general prison population.

3 - I was then, after a week brought to Alcala Meco, still in January 1987. Automatically on my reception to the prison, I was subjected to a vicious assault. The practice at the time was that the prison staff would not commit the acts of violence on prisoners, rather they would permit the National Police (the regular police) in to the cells of prisoners under the pretence of searching cells, but really this was simply an excuse to permit them access to brutalise the prisoners.

4 - Murder Attempt

During my time in Alcala Meco, I would have been transferred for trials to the Madrid Special Court (Audencio Nacional). During one of these transfers there was an attempt to kill me. A right wing pro Spain paramilitary group attempted to kill me. They put a bomb on the roadside so it would hit the van that was transporting me and my colleagues to court. Spanish police, remarkably (!), deactivated the bomb however no one was tried or charged with that.

5 - I was moved in March 1988 from Alcala Meco to Herrera de la Mancha (at Castilla de la Mancha about 650 km from the Basque Country) I was detained here until October 1989. I was detained here for the duration in solitary confinement. At the time, it was a special category prison, mainly for Basque political prisoners and all prisoners were held in solitary confinement. I was only entitled to 10 minutes per week for a visit with family members, but if on punishment (which we always were, for spurious reasons) this was reduced to 5 minutes per week. Indeed, the prison would very often, say after 3 minutes or less that time was up. The visit was always through a glass división. such my family were expected to conduct a 1300 km round trip for a 5 minute. Which they did.

The prison experience here was as per standard practice. In Herrera de la Mancha, the Guardia Civil would have conducted the cell beatings. They undertook this process with relish. (who were a civil as well as military police. They adhered to a military structure. They held a strong profile during the Spanish Civil War, and were Franco's main protectors.) They would have been more militant than the National Police.

6 - DISPERSAL POLICY

This was an official government policy, which was introduced at this time (1989). Martin Scheinin has criticised this in his recent report. Basque prisoners are systematically moved from prison to prison, around the 90 or so prisons within the Spanish prison system. (Spain in fact has the highest prison : population ratio in Europe.) This had an exceedingly unsettling effect on the mental and physical well being of prisoners. At that time there about 12 political prisoners who were identified for special attention to break the spirit and will of the Basque movement. I was identified for this special treatment. By implementation of this policy, prisoners were moved from prison to prison, as far away as possible from the Basque country. Very often families would arrive for a 10 minute visit only to be advised that their loved one had been moved to another prison 100's of km away, without notice. For me, when I was brought to a new prison, I would be moved within the prison, from one cellular confinement block, and within each cellular block from cell to cell. This was all designed to disorientate and break the spirit and will under the guise of security. During the transfers, which were frequent, for example, in 1989 I was in four separate prisons Herrera de la Mancha, Sevilla II, Cadiz and Cuelto in Africa !!

On every transfer, from prison or to court, I would have been subjected to vicious gauntlet of a welcoming committee on arrival, made up of the Guardia Civil. There is a human cost to the policy as well, 22 prisoners died as a result of the policy and 16 family members or friends have died as a result of a combination of road traffic accidents, or even heart attacks on the long journey.

7 - In October 1989 I was moved to Sevilla II , which was about 1000 km away from the Basque country. (Sevilla II was the new prison in Seville). At the time there was a case against the prison system in relation to the torture of general prisoners. They would have been handcuffed at night, and doused with water. The Judge who over saw the system, was aware of the torture but could never prove it. This went on at Sevilla. Whilst in Sevilla I was again detained in solitary confinement. It was very hard as this was the first year of the implementation of the dispersal strategy. I was in complete isolation, and was not in association with any other Basque prisoners. I was out of my cell one hour per day, and was allowed only two showers per week of ten minutes. The rest of the time was in the cell. With regards to visits, I was entitled to two visits per week, of twenty minutes but as it was a 2000 km round trip, my family could not visit twice per week and as such it was really once per week. It was a fight to get even 20 minutes per week.

8 - In late Autumn 1989 I was moved to Puerto de Santa Maria II, from Sevilla II, for only a couple of weeks. This was in Cadiz, next to Gibraltar. This would have been 1100 km, from the Basque country.

9 - From Puerto de Santa Maria II I was moved to a prison in Cueta, which is a Spanish colony in Morocco, Africa !! As such I spent Christmas 1989 in Africa. Cueta, was a military base for Spain, near the straits. As per usual I was in isolation and this was 1400 km from the Basque Country. I did have visits but for understandable reasons, there much less, perhaps once per

month. The costs were prohibitive for family members. The dispersal policy, had severe fiscal as well as psychological implications for family members as well as the severity of the situation for the prisoners.

10 - In March 1990, I was moved to Salto del Negro, which is in the Canary Islands. This was 3000 miles from the Basque country! This has always been the symbol of Basque repression. There was 14 prisoners transferred to Salto del Negro, and all were held in solitary confinement. When I speak of solitary confinement, very often, because there were that many prisoners held in solitary, there would be not enough room in the traditional solitary block, and as such the prison would do a DIY job on a wing, and would simply block out the windows and shut the doors. As such the conditions here were much worse than in an ordinary solitary cell. At Salto del Negro, there were vicious beatings, above and beyond the regular beatings, often hand cuffed to the cell bars, or to the window bars and subjected to beating. These beatings then led to me embarking upon hunger strike, along with my 14 comrades. The first main serious hunger strikes. I was force fed during three hunger strikes in 1990, each of them for between 40 and 43 days. Each hunger strike would finish after negotiations with the director of the prison, who would orally agree a settlement, leading to my coming off hunger strike, only to renege. The last strike required intravenous feeding to stop the strike. The last one finished when the authorities transferred 8 of us to other prisons. I endured kidney failure during this hunger strike, and this is an ailment which I suffer to this day.

11 - I was transferred to the prison hospital of Malaga prison in February 1991. This would have been after 11 months in Santo del Negro, so I would have been in Malaga for just the recovery time, a month at most and then I was moved back to Puerto de Santa Maria II in Spring 1991. I stayed there until April 1993. For these two years, it was the same as before. I was held in isolation. The cells were probably the worst that I ever seen. The windows were covered with metal, and I could not see outside, and they were covered in damp. This would have affected my health. I was only allowed to change my clothes once per week, a Wednesday. The assaults had slowed, but they would ransack the cells every three or four nights. I was subjected to the Gauntlet on entry to prison but not inside it. Perhaps they had learned their lesson from the hunger strikes and that we were not going to put up with it any more.

12 - In April 1993, I was moved to prison in Murcia. This would have been 800 km from the Basque country. In my 22 years in prison, Murcia was the prison that I could describe as not having been the worst. Whilst I was in isolation, it was not the worst isolation cell conditions that I endured. I was in solitary for three or four months, although I was not bothered and subjected to hassle and harassment. After the 3 / 4 months I was moved to the general prison population. This was the first time that I was out of confinement, in 6 years and that I was able to enjoy the company of my comrades. I was able to enjoy a normal prison life, albeit with restrictions that a regular prison would find difficult I was able to associate and enjoy an ordinary prison life for the rest of time in Murcia until I was moved to Ibiza. Whereas Murcia, was a quieter prison life, I was required to be produced at court in Madrid for court. I was required to be brought via Alicante, and during my over night stays in Alicante I was subjected to very serious assaults. One severe beating in particular. It was so severe that I requested an appointment with the prison medical consultant, who didn't arrive for 2 years.

In September 1995, the Inspector of Penitentiary, actually called some Basque prisoners to consult and he said he knew that they had been in the Canary Islands, in the worst prison conditions and

that we were now in a relaxed regime. He said that we could choose where we wanted to go, but the overt implication here was that we had to conform (ie become informers). I had refused to even meet with him, never mind agree to co operate, and as such I was moved again in October to Ibiza.

13 - In October 1995, therefore I was moved to Ibiza. An island off the coast of Spain, it was 10 hours from Barcelona by boat, and was therefore 1100 kms or so from the Basque country. I was back in the old solitary confinement regime, on my own, no ordinary prisoners never mind Basque prisoners. The block had 7 cells and I was on my own, and every night they would change my cell! I was not really subjected to brutality in Ibiza however the solitary was as solitary as I experienced. I was allowed reading material, but only with a view to study, two books at a time in the cell. I could change daily.

14 - In May 1996 I was transferred to Melilla, which is a northern colony from Africa. Again I was held in isolation, and the conditions were very bad. After Murcia, everything was degenerating, in terms of my treatment. Jaen was a bit like Alicante, a transit jail. I recall in July 1997, the day that they found a prison officer kidnapped by ETA, for over a year, and as a result I was assaulted viciously in Jaen. It was so bad, that the prison authorities in Melilla refused to accept me back into their custody and called for an independent doctor to aver that my injuries had not occurred under their jurisdiction. I used this report to sue the prison authorities for my assault in Jaen, however my case was dismissed on the grounds that the injuries were self inflicted! One of the injuries was a boot mark, at the top of my groin beside my testicles. I stayed in Melilla, all in isolation, for approximately 2 years, and I'm not sure when I moved possible October 1998, when I was moved to Puerto I.

15 - In October 1998, therefore, I was moved to Puerto I in Cadiz. I remember spending New Years Eve in 1998 in hospital at Puerto, as I was attacked on Christmas Eve by a mentally unstable prisoner paid cigarettes by the prison authorities, Said Mohammed from Morroco. I was at the control desk area, where the screws were, and SM attacked me from behind, and I sustained a head injury. A prisoner who saw the transaction seen everything and told me, but refused to give evidence. There was a media storm afterwards, that Inaki had attacked the poor son of an immigrant who had arrived from Morroco. My injuries were so bad that they had to take me to an external hospital for one night in Cadiz, and when I returned to prison I was kept in the hospital wing for three days. Said Mohammed had no injuries, I was attacked from behind and i lost consciousness immediately. There was meant to be a criminal case, but i haven't heard anything about it in years. Said Mohammed was never even arrested. He had previously been in solitary confinement as well but immediately after he attacked me was moved to a more relaxed regime.

Because the prison conditions in Puerto I were so bad, I decided to protest. The cells were very unhygienic and I only got to change clothes once a week. There were another 9 Basque prisoners in Puerto I at the same time and we decided to protest at the conditions and our treatment. As part of this protest, we did not avail of the limited exercise facilities. The only facilities were a small room, with walls and bars across the ceiling. For 14 months I was kept in my cell for the entire time, without any exercise or association. Every three months, to ensure nominal compliance with the Spanish legislation, I would be taken out of solitary confinement for a couple of hours. However, I would invariably be returned to solitary confinement in the afternoon. This did serve a brief respite, as it was the only day we were allowed to buy food or clothes.

16 - I was moved from Puerto I to Valdemoro in January / February 1999, which is in Madrid. I never stayed there very long, but every time I was taken to the Audencio Nacionale, this is where I was kept. I was here for 3 or 4 months in 1999 whilst I was in the Audencio Nacionale. At the time one of the Basque political prisoners died due to neglect in prison, he had cancer which was too far gone to resolve when diagnosed, and at that stage, the medics noticed a stomach complaint and one of the times I was in Madrid, a judge directed medical tests and I was diagnosed with polyps in the stomach, as a consequence of the hunger strikes, the intestine had gone very thin and had actually stuck together. I was detained in isolation whilst in Valdemoro. I was sent back to Puerto I in the summer of 1999, where I remained until the Spring of 2001.

17 - I was moved from Puerto I to Algeciras in the Spring of 2001, where I stayed until August 2006. I was detained here in isolation. In 2003 my sentence was served, in accordance with the law. In fact I was due out in 2000, as I had served $\frac{3}{4}$ of my sentence, in accordance with remission. This was taken from me and I was made to serve until Christmas 2003, wherein I would have served 18 years. Before my release at Christmas, the authorities removed my right to study, which permitted a form of a work out scheme with my studies. With the removal of my study, as was with all Basque political prisoners, this affected my remission rights and extended my sentence further until October 2004. My due release date on paper, an actual official Ministry of Justice document, was 24th October 2004, but a further repressive strategy was implemented against all Basques which cancelled penitentiary benefits which had the effect of further removing remission time from me personally as I had written two books. I was the only Basque to be affected by this particular policy so this removed an 8 month reduction, so this was a particular action against me. My remission for the study which led to the two books had previously been considered and authorised by the state Department dealing with my release date. This pushed my release back to 3rd August 2005. Indeed, the Spanish Justice Minister, Lopez Aguilar said, "we are going to invent any accusation, or necessary charges against de Juana so that he does not get out of prison"

18 - After the Minister made these comments I was charged with inciting terrorism and making threats to the government and faced with a prosecutor's request for 96 years in prison, for 2 articles that I had written just before I came out.. I was a columnist in a Basque newspaper and had an article every month, and the authorities basically took my last two articles and charged me with them. I was due out in October, so I think it was the November and December articles. The prosecution case opened on 3rd December 2004. After these charges I embarked on hunger strike. I commenced my first hunger strike on 7th August 2005 in Algeciras and endured 63 days. There was a group negotiating with the government, clergy, solicitors and politicians. The Spanish Govt admitted privately that the case was empty but that they were under pressure from the far right, and could not drop it. They stated privately that the sentence after trial would be no more than 2 years, and as such I came off and started eating. Once I recovered I was transferred to Aranjuez awaiting trial.

19 - I was transferred to Aranjuez in October 2005, awaiting trial, first of all within the prison hospital. The trial commenced on 27th October 2005, and I was sentenced on 7th November 2005, through the media I heard that I was to be sentenced to 13 years. As soon as I heard that, I started my second hunger strike on 7th November. I was sentenced on 8th November, and was given 12 years and 7 months. The second hunger strike lasted 115 days wherein I was shackled to the hospital bed, which they did in the first one as well. I was force fed intravenously, as my potassium was low and subjected me to the risk of a heart attack. This second hunger strike only

ended when my appeal against sentence, which was heard within two months against the norm of an ordinary wait of 2 years, and my sentence was reduced to one of 3 years. The government agreed to allow me to serve the 1 ½ years which I had left in Donosti, San Sebastian, my home town. I only stopped my hunger strike when I arrived in the prison hospital of Donosti on 1st March 2007. On 7th June 2007, ETA ended their ceasefire and at that stage the government reneged again on their promise, and still there was a further 14 months of sentence and I was brought back to Aranjuez. I was released on 2nd August 2008, and as I knew I would not be allowed to live in my home country in peace I decided to come to Ireland and arrived here in 3rd August 2008, the very next day.

In total I spent around 17 years in isolation, of a total of 22 years imprisonment. During these 22 years I was brutalised and had no recourse but to hunger strike on several occasions. I was the victim of spurious government policies, at every single juncture and these current proceedings are merely the end product of this campaign of singular victimisation of me.