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Abraham Serfaty has died - and Mordechai Vanunu is still trapped in Israel

- Homepage - News - News Articles -

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Abraham Serfati died last week in Morocco. From CAPJPO-EuroPalestine we have borrowed the biography of this great militant figure.

And we place alongside Serfaty another great figure of the international Jewish world, born in Morocco, moved to Israel and still detained there: Mordechai Vanunu.

Abraham Serfaty was born in 1926 in Casablanca, in a family that was part of the sizable Jewish minority in Morocco.

From the age of 18 he was one of the founding members of the Moroccan Communist Party. Then with shifting organisational affiliations he broke with the Communists at the end of the 1960s to lead another Marxist group - he would remain always faithful to the ideals of internationalism and workers' emancipation.

Serfaty, a trained engineer, began by putting his skills to the service of the new independent Morocco (from 1956), and he was part of attempts to give the nation economic independence, in the mining sector.

In vain: Royal Morocco, especially after Hassan II became king (1961), quickly proved a typical example of neo-colonialism, and also an iron dictatorship, harsh on the poor and sweet on the corrupt men inside the system.

Opposition by Abraham Serfaty and his comrades of the Ila al Amam group (= Forward!) grew, and so did repression. He was arrested for the first time in 1972 and savagely tortured, then arrested again in 1974 and condemned to life imprisonment for "plotting against the security of the state".

He remained in prison until 1991, when, after an intense international solidarity campaign, the king agreed to free him and at the same time expelled him from his own country. Only in 2000 did Abraham Serfaty finally return to Morocco as a free man.

Unsurprisingly, Serfaty had a long preoccupation with the Palestine question. He was one of the rare members of Morocco's Jewish community to have anticipated and resisted the formidable enterprise that uprooted the Moroccan Jews - an enterprise carried out jointly by the Israeli and Moroccan governments, with the logistical support of the French government, between 1955 and 1961.

While the Moroccan Kingdon allowed the development of outbursts of xenophobia tinged with anti-semitism, Mossad, eager to obtain a cheap captive labour force, organised a vast migration operation to Israel, transferring over 200 000 Jewish Moroccans in the space of a few years.

Treated by the Israeli leadership "like Arabs" - which they indeed were - many of these Israelis from Morocco still speak of the operation as really an abduction.

So Serfaty's opposition to Zionism and his solidarity with the Palestinian people was due not solely to his international views on the future of humanity, but also to the colonial adventure whereby the Jews of Morocco were dragged away some thousands to kilometres to the east.

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Serfaty was a tireless critic of the crimes of the Israeli government. He was one of those who began a legal action, in Morocco in 2006, against Amir Perez, Israel's Minister of Defense at the time of the attack on Lebanon, who was still a Moroccan citizen!

Serfaty's wife, Christine Daure-Serfaty, announced that the old combatant would be buried on 19 November in the Jewish cemetery in Casablanca, beside his parents.

CAPJPO-EuroPalestine, 18 November 2010

See also Interview in French of Serfati by Abdel Hamadan (17' 31")

Mordechai Vanunu, when a young child with his family, was one of the Jewish Moroccans transplanted to Israel in the late 1950s.

Later, because in 1986 he gave the British press proof that Israel had nuclear weapons, he was abducted in Rome by Mossad, drugged, forcibly repatriated to Israel, tried in a closed court by a military tribunal, and condemned to 18 years of prison. He served this sentence from 1986 to 2004, including 11 years in solitary. When his sentence ended he was freed in April 2004; later he has been condemned again to **three months imprisonment for having spoken to foreign journalists.** He completed that sentence during the current year 2010.

But today, Mordechai Vanunu is still trapped in the frontiers of Israel.

Vanunu has thus become an "Israeli in spite of himself", like the young men of Alsace who were conscripted by force into the German Army in 1940.

The governments and authorities of the globe have not managed - usually they have not tried - to make Israel grant this man his most basic human rights, including the right to emigrate from a country whose policies he rejects and whose citizenship he no longer wants. Our repeated messages to Israel's ambassadors in France, since 2002, have never received the least response. Likewise, our letters asking top-level French leaders (president and ministers) to intervene with their Israeli counterparts have remained unanswered.

In Morocco, Abraham Serfaty paid a high price for his desire for truth and justice. In Israel, Mordechai Vanunu continues to pay a high price. It's not a good look to be a Jew and to exercise free speech in the dictatorial 'democracies' that are supported by the beautiful democracy of France.

Notable also in this regard is the silence of France's journalists and medias. They are rightly concerned about press freedom and the freeing of any of their colleagues taken hostage, but their silence here contributes not a little to the hushing-up of the Vanunu affair. This man has served a punishment of 18 years prison for passing on information to foreign journalists, and a further punishment of three months prison in 2010 for letting other foreign journalists interview him - does his case not merit their interest?

So the indifference and silence of France's human rights organisations contribute also to this iniquity.

Will there at last be some spirits attentive and courageous enough to be the exceptions?

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