

Death of a PHd Student

When I met Giulio Regini it did not cross my mind for a minute that this interview will become the most famous among the interviews and meetings I held with researchers and people concerned with labour issues, due to the tragic way that Giulio's life ended, at the mere age of 28.

When this meeting ended after no more than an hour, Giulio had left a pleasant impression on me. Throughout the interview he seemed shy and extremely polite. I was impressed with his questions that were very specific and revolved around the challenges that face the independent unions movement. Do independent unions have the ability to face these challenges; what are the future scenarios for the labour movement in light of the severe economic crisis and the escalation in the measures hostile to freedoms and to the union freedoms in particular.

The announcement of Giulio's death came after 10 days of his disappearance. The condition in which the body was found reveals that Giulio was murdered viciously and was subjected to monstrous torture before his death. This cause international outrage and great interest from the scientific circles.

Giulio was a PhD candidate in one of the world's most refined universities (Cambridge) and was associated with the Italian labour union (CGIL), the largest trade union in Italy and one of the largest in Europe.

More than 4500 academics from 90 countries signed a statement demanding that the Egyptian government seriously investigate his murder and that the culprits of this heinous crime should meet with the appropriate punishment.

There also are movements by European unions lead by the Union of Italian syndicates in the same direction. Additionally the Italian government expressed its interest in the statements of the Italian prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. The Italian interior minister stated that an autopsy done on Giulio Regini's body revealed that he was subjected to "inhuman animal-like violence". The Italian minister of foreign affairs asserted that his government will continue pressuring the Egyptian government to find out who tortured and killed Giulio.

Giulio's death received wide media coverage and some newspapers point their accusations at the Egyptian police according to the Italian newspaper La Stampa that said "The Egyptian police is implicated in Regini's death". The New York Times headline read "The Security's fingerprints are on the body of the Italian student". The coverage of the New York Times included "Egyptian security forces come out as the most prominent suspect since the conditions of his disappearance resemble many similar incidents against many Egyptians".

I expect, through the many calls that I received from international news agencies and Italian newspapers, a campaign of anger around the torture and murder of the Italian PhD student Giulio Regini that will escalate and with it the pressure from the Italian government will continue to find the culprits of the crime. This will but the Egyptian government and especially the ministry of interior, in a true crisis that they cannot escape except after a serious investigation to reveal the perpetrator of this crime in the coming days

Kamal Abbas

The labour leader and the coordinator of the Center for Trade Union and Worker Services