

HUMAN RESOURCES*

Custodial sentences and security measures shall be oriented towards re-education and social reintegration and shall not consist of forced labour (...).

Article 25.2 of the **Spanish Constitution**

08.30: Siren. Headcount. Tidy up and make beds.

09.00: Cells opened to go down for breakfast.

10.00: Study, gym, football.

14.00: Lunch.

The torture they did to me consisted of emptying a sack of chickpeas onto the floor of a room and forcing me to crawl on them while handcuffed.

Whenever we go into the dining room a little queue forms. We file past the counter (self-service style). We pick up a stainless-steel tray with compartments, we receive the food served up by our fellow inmates on kitchen duty, and lastly we pick up some sky-blue plastic cutlery and a bread roll.

If someone saw a white butterfly, it meant good news was on the way.

When I was in solitary confinement I pierced my ears three times. Once, in the yard, another inmate pierced my bellybutton. Her lips were sewn together in protest, she didn't speak or eat.

07:30: The loudspeaker announces that the headcount is about to start. I pee. I make the bed. I wash my face. Two prison officers open the door.

07:45: The loudspeaker announces that the showers are open.

08:00: The loudspeaker informs that the cells are being opened. We queue up for medication. Breakfast. I always sit at the same table, with the same inmates. There are around six of us per table.

09.00: Yard.

I liked sitting on the ground and taking cover close to the walls, in the yard, the corridors, and so on, because someone could threaten you with a homemade knife. There were a lot of knives in jail. Many inmates who got into that scene handcrafted a knife, to fight for survival or to impose their hegemony over weaker inmates.

If you don't have money to buy a TV but you're well-behaved—you study and so on, know what I mean?— then they move you up to the letter A. They have the letters A, B, C, and D. The letter D is for an inmate who is in real trouble. C is for an inmate who has just been admitted, B is for an inmate who is doing OK, not great and not terrible, studying sometimes but not always. And A is for an inmate who is doing well. So when you get to A, they give you a TV, you can put in a request for one.

Sometimes they force you to take medication. They force you because they can see you're in a bad way, and that's how they think. They think that medication is the answer.

You get no protection at all in prison. They don't even protect you from yourself. You're in there because you asked for it, because you did something bad, because you deserve it. The feeling of guilt will be burnt into you.

07.30: Siren. First headcount.

07.45: Cells open for showers. I go to the kitchen because I work in the dining room.

08.15: Breakfast is served.

09.00: I study for my school-leaving certificate.

11.00: Yard or gym. Let off steam.

They put me in solitary confinement for 40 days. It was a totally soundproof cell, without any connection or contact with the life of the prison community. They took your mattress away during the day and gave you a bar of soap. You weren't entitled to a book, you weren't allowed to write, nothing.

When you go to prison, at first you feel really nervous. Then they search you, they take away the things that are prohibited, and they take you up to your cell. And you stay there for a day or two, it depends. You're there alone, without a TV or anything. You have a shower and a bed, that's all. You start thinking, you get anxious. Some people can stand it, but others start to self-harm so that they can get a TV.

Sometimes I was on the verge of going crazy. I was crazy for a month. Why? Because there are so many problems. You think about all the things you've done, and your family... It comes down on you like a tonne of bricks, and at one point I went a bit crazy, to be honest.

You have a hard time, your body has a hard time, I guess every cell in your body has a hard time. And you try to calm down and cover up the pain with the medication they give you. And they give it to you at the drop of a hat.

09:30: Announcement for methadone dispensing. Queue for doses. Back out to the yard.

11.00: They put up the mail list. We all run up to see whether we got news from the outside world. What joy when you see your name on the list!

13.15: The loudspeaker announces midday medication. We join the queue.

In a corner of the cell there's a stainless-steel sink where you can wash your face and brush your teeth. There's a round mirror, which is not a mirror because it's old and opaque. You can't see your face clearly, it's a bit larger than a hand. You can't really see yourself. There are no mirrors where you can see what you look like. But the doors leading from the yard to the dining room are made of glass, and I used to like looking at my body and checking out how the clothes I was wearing looked on me. Also in the U booth, where the prison officers were, the glass was dark so that you couldn't see inside, and I used it as a mirror because it reflected really well.

If a glass broke, it meant someone was going to be released. We'd all squeal.

You have to protect yourself in there, nobody is going to protect you. Someone might punch you. If you ignore someone, they might punch you. You have to protect yourself and you have to know who you're spending your time with.

Physical activity, a lot of it, self-control, yoga, meditation, writing, reading a lot, cultivating sensitivity....

12.00: I go back to the dining room to prepare lunch.

13.00: Lunch is served.

13.30: Tidy up and clean the kitchen and dining room.

14.00: We go back to the cells. Headcount. Announcement for afternoon workshops.

15.00: Workshops.

We used to remove the calluses from our feet by rubbing them against the ground in the yard, against the rough concrete floor.

The conditions in solitary confinement are: 24 hours locked up on your own in a cell, and if you want to go out into a tiny yard—I think it was for an hour or two—you can, but... you don't go out. It's really bad. In solitary confinement I decided to get off methadone so that something would happen in my life. My t-shirts were soaked in sweat from withdrawal, I remember hanging them on my bunk bed.

They protect citizens, but when you go inside, they don't protect you. You're worth nothing to them, nothing at all, really. Hardly anyone helps you in there.

Some prison officers are pissed off at you. Because some inmates have mobile phones, some have drugs, everything gets brought in. And the prison officers know you have these things, but they don't find them when they search you. They know that

you've learnt how to handle yourself inside, and they report you so you'll get downgraded from level A and have your TV taken away. Or you haven't done anything and they report you so you get two days down in the basement (punishment cell). If you get into a fight with knives, they take you down there and you might spend three months in a room, without a TV or anything. And you can only go outside for half an hour, in the mornings.

13:30: Loudspeaker announcement to go into the dining room. They call us by diets: vegetarian, Muslim, and finally the general diet.

14:30: Cell. Headcount. Nap. Reading.

16:30: Loudspeaker announces another headcount and then cells open. Back to the yard. Coffee from a machine. Yard.

20:00: Loudspeaker announces evening medication. We join the queue.

The only sign of life in the prison yard, apart from our bodies, was an olive tree in the middle of all the concrete. I used to like looking at it and touching it, its trunk and leaves.

Defenceless, vulnerable young inmates, who didn't fit into any of the groups, and who fell into the paedophile rings of inmates with purchasing power.

There's a lot of angst around motherhood, it's widespread. It's one of the most distressing aspects in women's prisons, because most inmates are mothers. There's a sense of guilt, of having abandoned your kids, of not being there.

If the soles of your feet itched, it meant you'd soon be out, walking on the streets.

On New Year's Eve we used to burn our knickers out of the window. On that night, up to three people were allowed to get together in each cell, and you could choose who they were. We'd listen to music, there was a party atmosphere and drugs (if we had any). Once I made "chicha" out of fermented apples in a bucket. It produced an alcoholic beverage and also earned me disciplinary reports.

20:00: Loudspeaker announces evening medication. We join the queue.

20:15: Loudspeaker starts calling out the various diets and we go into the dining room. Dinner.

21:30: Back to our cells to sleep.

22:00: Final headcount.

22:22: Those with a TV watch a film. Sleep.

There was no way to channel sexuality. So there was a lot of paedophilia, rape, and abuse of young prisoners, and some prisoners prostituted themselves. In prison, the

sexuality factor has a decisive influence on whether you end of going crazy or becoming violent.

If you don't stab or cut yourself, or do something stupid, you don't get what you want, like a TV for example.

I came out of prison with social hatred and I immediately looked for guns and like-minded criminals. And that social hatred fuelled more dangerous crime. So instead of going to rob a campsite, a bar, or a house, you go straight for banks and jewellery stores.

In prison, I don't think about the outside world, or about the people inside, or about what's going to happen tomorrow. It's done. I only think about sleeping, getting up in the morning, studying, working out, going back to the cell, resting as much as I can until 3pm, and going to work. Because if you start thinking about the outside world, about life and where you've ended up, you fall apart and you go crazy.

20.00: Dinner in the dining room or cell.

21.00: TV in the dining room or cell time.

22.00: Bugle call. Headcount in cells and locking of cells.

23.00: Lights out.

02.00: Lights on to check each cell.

Material provided by:

D. P. M. (b. 1949)

Time served in prison: from 1966 to 1972 and from 1972 to 1979. 11 years and 10 months

M. M. M. (b. 1975)

Time served in prison: from 2004 to 2010. 6 years

Y. A. A. (b. 1976)

Time served in prison: from 2007 to 2015. 7 years and 4 months

M. A. R. (b. 1999)

Time served in prison: from 2019 to 2022. 2 years and 6 months

* This material is part of the research process that Núria Güell conducted in dialogue with ex-prisoners in Spain in April/May 2022 for the *Human Resources* art work (Frankfurt, 2022).

<https://www.nuriaguell.com/portfolio/human-resources/>