

“ Texas, Death Row ”
from Daniele et Rene SIRVEN
Preface by Robert Badinter

The account you are about to read is, in the words of the authors, not a 'judgement' and even less a 'trial'. It is, rather, an 'appeal to the conscience of those who make laws, decide and judge from their well-established position to reconsider, to open their ears which have to date remained closed to all arguments'.

It is with great modesty and simplicity that Daniele and Rene SIRVEN, untiring defenders of the abolition of the death penalty, want their disgust to be heard through their work with the association 'Fight for Justice - Languedoc-Roussillon, France'. They recount the story of their extraordinary and unforgettable meeting with Rickey-Lynn LEWIS, condemned to death in Texas and on death row since 1994.

Daniele and Rene SIRVEN denounce over and over again the harsh prison conditions, the hypocrisy of the authorities, and the cruelty of the sentence and the unjust outcome of a judicial process tainted by gray areas.

As is unfortunately too often the case in judicial processes in some of the states in the USA, the question of Rickey-Lynn Lewis's guilt remains controversial. The authors make only passing reference to this aspect in their account. For them, apart from the unacceptable doubt surrounding the sentence, it is the inhumanity of the death penalty itself that they denounce. The cruelty of the death sentence reduces those who carry it out to the level of executioners and murderers. This irreversible act strips the convicted person of all humanity.

Daniele and Rene SIRVEN see their account is a weapon in the fight being led by themselves and their association over recent years to have Rickey-Lynn Lewis's trial reviewed. The stay of execution, gained thanks to the perseverance and generosity of those citizens who took part in a week of mobilization organized in Montpellier, is a first encouraging step but is not enough to remove the threat hanging over the condemned man, which grows more urgent with every day that passes.

Let us hope that the appeal by Daniele and Rene SIRVEN in all our names for justice, fairness and democracy be heard not only for Rickey-Lynn LEWIS but also for all the men and women condemned to death by the world.

Robert BADINTER