

Experimental murder?



By Guillermo Alvarado

The U.S. state of Alabama recently executed a prisoner using a method insufficiently proven from the scientific point of view and that the United Nations Organization qualifies simply and plainly as torture.

Kenneth Eugene Smith, sentenced for his involvement in a contract killing, was restrained on a stretcher, placed on his face with an industrial-strength respirator mask and connected to a tank of pure nitrogen until he died.

According to the authorities, this method does not cause any pain to the victim, but this has not yet been proven and its critics consider it a cruel, inhumane and, moreover, experimental act.

Moreover, the so-called nitrogen hypoxia is used in veterinary practice to euthanize animals, but before that they are administered strong sedatives to avoid any possible pain, which did not happen with Smith.

The condemned man's defenders made multiple appeals to prevent this aberrant act, even pointing out that the U.S. Constitution prohibits cruel or unusual punishment, but all to no avail.

Eugene Smith had already escaped death before, when they were going to kill him by lethal injection, but after several hours of being tied up they were unable to insert a catheter into his veins to administer the chemicals and had to interrupt the pitiful spectacle.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who along with two colleagues opposed this legal killing stated, "Having failed to kill Smith on his first attempt, Alabama has selected him as its 'guinea pig' to test a method of execution never before attempted. The world is watching." And it is true that the world was watching, perhaps precisely because the United States spends much of its time looking everywhere for alleged human rights violators, but is incapable of observing what within its own territory is happening.

Neither Donald Trump, who seeks to return to the White House, nor Joseph Biden, who now occupies it, said anything about this atrocity that, despite his crime, Smith undoubtedly never deserved to suffer. They will know that poem by John Donne entitled For Whom the Bell Tolls, written in the 17th century, which says: "No man is an island; the death of any man affects me, because I am united with all mankind; therefore, never ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

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