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# Zen in jail

**By Edouard Tereskiewicz, Toulon (France)**

As you know, I have been since 2012 volunteer in the prison of Farlede (Toulon). There are there 1025 prisoners: prisoners in pre-trial detention, but also convicts.

The total Zen group counts 12 participants, with an average of assistance to each session of 7 to 8 people. Let me tell you a little bit more about our group:

Recently, I made an opinion survey among the prisoners about their feelings concerning the meditation sessions. They took turn to speak. The result was that they find some peace, some serenity in the sessions and as they say: "We are able there to let off steam" ...

For some, the Wednesday (day when I come) is the most important appointment of the week. They practice other disciplines, but for them the Zen sessions are the activity which brings them freedom of dialogue, a help to discernment and an open-mindedness which leads them to awareness of Reality.

Outside the Zen sessions, the participants help each other, share discussions and show solidarity.

The Zen group is well perceived by the guards. I have never had troubles or difficulties.

Moreover this year, as the workshop Yoga did not take place in July and August, I was asked to come also on Mondays ... We had then many participants: between 12 and 14, and it was not very easy to manage, but with the help of the prisoners who were my usual participants, we could find harmony ... The group is ready to make this experience again.

Time flies for me in prison and I do not regret having crossed the threshold of this jail (or more accurately "the multiple doors and double-security entrances", hi! hi!)

Of course, there were critical moments: violence, suicide, despair, threats, contempt ... But beyond all this, there is a tight-knit group which works well and that's why I want to persevere. Their smile after the despair gives me energy, the prisoners give me a lot ... Their strong characters, their sufferings, their problems made me go forward enormously in my own practice.

Yes, Zen works OK for them, and if you look for a strong practice, organize some Zen Meditation sessions in a penitentiary near your home. It is simple, you just have to ask permission to the authorities of your city and to wait then more or less for 6 months.

And then, you put some zafu in a kitbag ... and good Practice!