

# appeals

## SOUTH AFRICA RESPONDS TO AI INTERVENTION

South African authorities immediately responded to AI's call on Minister of Justice James KRUGER of 27 February "to intervene personally to ensure humane treatment for black political prisoners held on Robben Island".

The call came after AI received reports from reliable sources that recently convicted leaders of the "black consciousness" movement, now imprisoned on Robben Island, had been physically assaulted by prison warders using guard dogs. The assaults occurred when 35 prisoners working in the prison's lime quarry protested against the aggressive behaviour of one particular warder and demanded to see the prison commandant. Many of the prisoners are reported to have been bitten by the guard dogs unleashed upon them by the warders.

A spokesman for the Commissioner of Prisons confirmed on 28 February that there had been an incident at the lime quarry in which guard dogs "might have been involved". He said that the commissioner had referred the matter to the police for an impartial investigation in view of the possibility of "unjustified behaviour".

Writing to Mr Kruger on 14 March, AI welcomed the promised investigation and suggested that certain steps be taken to ensure its strict impartiality.

AI also renewed its request to send a medical mission to South Africa to investig-

ate allegations of ill-treatment and torture of political detainees (March *CAT Bulletin*).

Mr Kruger had announced on 23 February that he did not consider it necessary to set up a special judicial investigation, and repeated his claim that a number of prisoners had committed suicide, some "on communist party orders". He said that 16 blacks had died in 1976 while held without trial under security laws.

Mr Kruger's statements about the deaths of black political detainees were echoed on 7 March by General Hendrik VAN DEN BERGH, head of South Africa's Bureau of State Security (BOSS). Speaking on the issue for the first time in public, he said on television that it was in the interest of police interrogators, from the point of view of obtaining evidence on offences against state security, that detainees did not "commit suicide".

*Please send courteously worded letters, appealing for an independent international investigation into allegations of ill-treatment and torture of political detainees in South Africa, to: The Hon. J.T. Kruger, Minister of Justice, Cape Town, South Africa.*

## Ananías MAIDANA Palacios, Paraguay

Ananías MAIDANA Palacios, one of the four longest serving political prisoners in Latin America, has not been released on 27 January as reported in the March *Newsletter*.

Señor Maidana Palacios, along with Antonio MAIDANA, Alfredo ALCORTA and Julio ROJAS, had been detained for 18 to

19 years in Paraguay for membership of the communist party. Señor Maidana Palacios had never been formally charged, while the sentences of the other three expired many years ago.

Latest information reaching AI indicates that 53-year-old Señor Maidana Palacios is still detained, while the release of the other three has been confirmed.

Señor Maidana Palacios has now been transferred from *Emboscada*, the prison camp for political offenders, to *Investigaciones*, a police department in Asunción known as an interrogation and torture center.

There is concern that any further ill-treatment may seriously damage his health. As reported in the March *Newsletter*, all four long serving prisoners had been interned in a police clinic in March 1976 after a prolonged hunger strike. At the time a medical report said they were all "suffering from hypertension, stomach ulcers, haemorrhoids, anaemia and other ailments. They have not seen daylight for more than a decade and are almost blind".

*Please send courteously worded letters urging the release of Ananías Maidana Palacios, to: Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República, General Alfredo Stroessner, Palacio de Gobierno, Asunción, Paraguay.*

## NEWS FROM PAST APPEALS

• Vladimir Borisov, Soviet Union (February *CAT Bulletin*), was released from Leningrad Psychiatric Hospital number 3 on 4 March.

• Pasa GUVEN, Turkey (February *CAT Bulletin*) was also released recently, according to reports.

## Spanish Civil Guard Break Up "Amnesty" Vigil

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Lequeitio to ask the bishop to close the church the following Sunday "as an act of purification for the blood shed in the sacred precinct and to express the repudiation of these events by the parishioners of Lequeitio" □

## BISHOPS CONDEMN TORTURE AND EXECUTIONS IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua's seven Roman Catholic bishops condemned in January the use of torture, rape and summary executions by the government of General Anastasio SOMOZA DEBAYLE.

Their condemnation was contained in a pastoral letter, which referred specifically to a situation of "terror and extermination" among rural peasants.

The bishops' document protests the national guard's continued use of "humiliating and inhuman methods; from torture and rape to executions without civil or military trial", reporting that "the state of terror forces many of our *campesinos* to flee in desperation from their homes and their lands", and that church teachers have been "captured by members of the army and

tortured, and others have disappeared".

The London *Financial Times* of 3 March reported the response of General Roger BERMUDEZ, a government spokesman, that "many of the bishops' charges are false and others are exaggerated".

The national guard, Nicaragua's combined army/police force, carries out extensive internal security functions, as well as judicial functions under a state of siege imposed in December 1974 after an armed assault and kidnapping carried out by the leftwing guerrilla group Sandinist National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*). Under the state of siege hundreds of people have been detained, many apparently arbitrarily. Some have been held incommunicado for up to 8 months and most have reportedly been subjected to torture.

AI has substantial evidence of the systematic use of torture and of extra-legal executions in Nicaragua.

The rural population is subjected to the worst reported abuses. Peasants throughout northern Nicaragua are detained and interrogated during counter-insurgency operations of the national guard. When detained they often "disappear"—they are reportedly either taken secretly to rural detention camps or die in custody □

## ILL-TREATMENT ALLEGED IN KUWAIT PRISON

A letter alleging ill-treatment recently sent to AI by a prisoner in Kuwait bears out previous allegations of routine ill-treatment and torture of common law prisoners in Kuwait Central Prison (August 1976 *CAT Bulletin*).

The prisoner recounted his serious ill-treatment by two prison officers when he was suspected of a disciplinary offence. His letter stated that he was kicked with heavy boots on his head and back, and beaten with sticks until he lost consciousness. He was then transferred to a punishment cell, where he was kept for sometime in isolation without sufficient clothing or covers to protect him from the cold. His requests to be taken to the prison hospital were refused.

The prisoner said that such treatment is used routinely and on the slightest pretext:

"My case is not unique. There are many prisoners who are beaten and tortured and put in punishment cells without any reason or because of a slight offence. . . The purpose of writing you this letter is not to seek help from your organization for myself only, but to inform you about the cruel and inhuman treatment which is given to us."

AI has again written to Sheikh Sabah AL-SALEM AL-SABAH, the Emir of Kuwait, urging him to investigate allegations of inhuman treatment and to take any steps necessary to improve the situation of prisoners.