CHILDREN



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CHILDREN

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Published 1979 by Amnesty International Publications 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, England Copyright © Amnesty International Publications ISBN 0 900058 95 1
Al Index: ACT 31/03/79
Original Language: English Printed by acco, Leuven — Belgium

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These three children are named Simón, Olga and Sophie.

Simón is from Argentina. He was 20 days old when he was arrested with his mother in Buenos Aires in July 1976. His mother is now known to have been illegally transported to a prison in neighbouring Uruguay. But of Simón there has been no trace.

Olga is from the Soviet Union. In 1974 her father was sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment and 2 years' exile for writing and distributing private essays. He is now living in exile in Siberia. After her father was sent to Siberia, Olga and her sister were taken by their mother to visit him. He had difficulty recognizing his daughters. Olga's sister hid her face, mumbling, "It is not my daddy".

Sophie is from Syria. She is one of a family of nine. Her family fled from Syria to Lebanon in 1963 after her father had been detained for supporting a previous government and

then released. Syrian security forces abducted him back to Syria where he was sentenced in 1970 to 5 years' imprisonment. Four years after he should have been released, he is still being held in a military prison. The family is living in exile in Lebanon. The mother, who is in poor health, is struggling to support Sophie, her four other children and two adopted children aged two and four, orphaned during the civil war in Lebanon.

Each of these children has suffered a fate shared by children throughout the world. Some of their most fundamental human rights have been grossly violated.

Like Simón, children have disappeared after arrest. Some have been subjected to torture while in detention. Others have been killed at the hands of the armed forces and police.

Like Olga, children have been separated from parents who have been imprisoned or who have become political refugees. Some children have become orphans after their parents have been abducted or killed. Some governments have registered the orphans under false names and birth dates to prevent their being traced by next-of-kin.

Like Sophie, children suffer from the consequences of the arrest and imprisonment of one or both of their parents. Some children are forced to witness the torture of their parents. Some are born after one of their parents has been incarcerated or executed. For other children, the separation from one or both parents, broken only by a few short visits to prison, means an enormous psychological burden of insecurity.

Amnesty International is aware of cases of pregnant women who, under the most appalling conditions, give birth in prison. In many of these cases, their babies are removed after the birth and are never traced.

Amnesty International is also aware of young people who have spent virtually half their lives in prison, having become political prisoners as children and then been held for more than a dozen years without charge or trial.

The cases outlined in this booklet are only a handful of those known to Amnesty International. At the same time, political conditions in many countries make it impossible for Amnesty International to collect or receive information which would enable it to assess the frequency with which children, or adults, have become victims of similar human rights violations.

Each of the cases cited in this publication must therefore stand symbolically for children everywhere whose early life is scarred by such acts of intolerance and cruelty.

The information in this publication was correct at the time of writing: June 1979.

Children are subject to arrest and detention, not only because they may have been taken to prison with their parents, but also because they have been imprisoned for their own beliefs —— or what the authorities believe to be their beliefs.

Some are put into prison for no reason at all.

A child of 11, Veneque Duclairon, was among the peasants of Plaine de Cul-de-Sac, Haiti, who were arrested in 1969 following protests against deteriorating economic conditions. All were imprisoned without charge or

Under the conditions which have applied to detainees in Haiti, the child found himself completely isolated from the outside world and without any chance of obtaining the assistance of a lawyer. If he is still alive today, he is 21 years old. But those who have tried desperately to obtain information about him, now fear that he may have died in prison.

A former Haitian political prisoner has reported that Veneque Duclairon died in 1973 in the national penitentiary. This information cannot be confirmed; however, he was not among the group of 104 Haitian political prisoners released by a presidential decree in September 1977.

14-year-old schoolgirl, Sumilah, was arrested in October 1965 at the time which followed.



Wives and children have been transported to Indonesia's prison colony on Buru Island to join their husbands and fathers. Altogether there may now be about 400 children living in the camp under the same conditions as the prisoners. Although prisoners with families were granted release in late 1978, half a year later they were still On the other side of the world, a on the island. This family, having spent years on the island prison, has chosen to remain there. In another of the attempted coup in Indonesia. case, a boy was transported to Buru Amnesty International has no reason with his father, a political prisoner. to believe that she was involved in the The father died in captivity but his attempted coup, or in the violence son is believed to be still in the prison colony.



This photograph, taken secretly in Alexanderplatz, East Berlin, shows the arrest in 1977 of the Gerdes family who had, minutes before, unfurled a homemade banner in support of their request to be allowed to leave the German Democratic Republic. Prior to demonstrating in public they had submitted 10 unsuccessful applications for permission to leave the country. In February 1978, the parents were sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. Their children, Claudia and Ralf, were aged 12 and 13 at the time of the arrest. They were held in a children's home until their parents were released and allowed to travel to West Berlin.

She was detained in various camps but was never taken before a court or given the right to contact a lawyer. After 14 years in detention she was released in April 1979.

Among Indonesia's thousands of political prisoners are many who, like Sumilah, are now in their 20s. Among them are youths who were arrested in 1965 at a government paramilitary training center for young people at Halim airport, just outside Jakarta, which served as a military airbase. During the events surrounding the attempted coup in 1965, all those at the young people's training center at Halim airport were arrested, regardless of whether they were airforce personnel or trainees. Most of those arrested have never been charged or tried. As a consequence young people whose sole offence was that on 30 September 1965 they were at the Halim center have spent the past 14 years (in many cases this is more than half their lives thus far) in prison.

In South Africa in recent years children have been detained without trial under the Terrorism Act and other security laws. They do not appear to be given different treatment to adults detained under the same laws: they are subject to interrogation and brutal treatment by security police and are frequently kept incommunicado and in solitary confinement.

Although the South African authorities have admitted that a large number of children are in detention, they have refused to give details about their ages. On 21 February 1979 the Minister of Justice stated in Parliament that 252 young people under the age of 18 had been detained under the Terrorism or Internal Security Acts during 1978. Twenty five of these were girls.

The South African authorities are not obliged to give information to the parents of children detained incommunicado under the Terrorism Act. The parents are not allowed to visit the children and cannot demand habeas corpus or any form of effective legal protection for the children.

Children are also subject to prosecution and imprisonment for political offences on the same basis as adults. In answer to a question in Parliament in June 1978 the Minister of Justice admitted that six children, one of 14 and five of 15 years of age, were imprisoned on Robben Island, the prison island off the Cape Town coast - the maximum security prison for black prisoners.

Carlos Patricio Fariña Oyarce

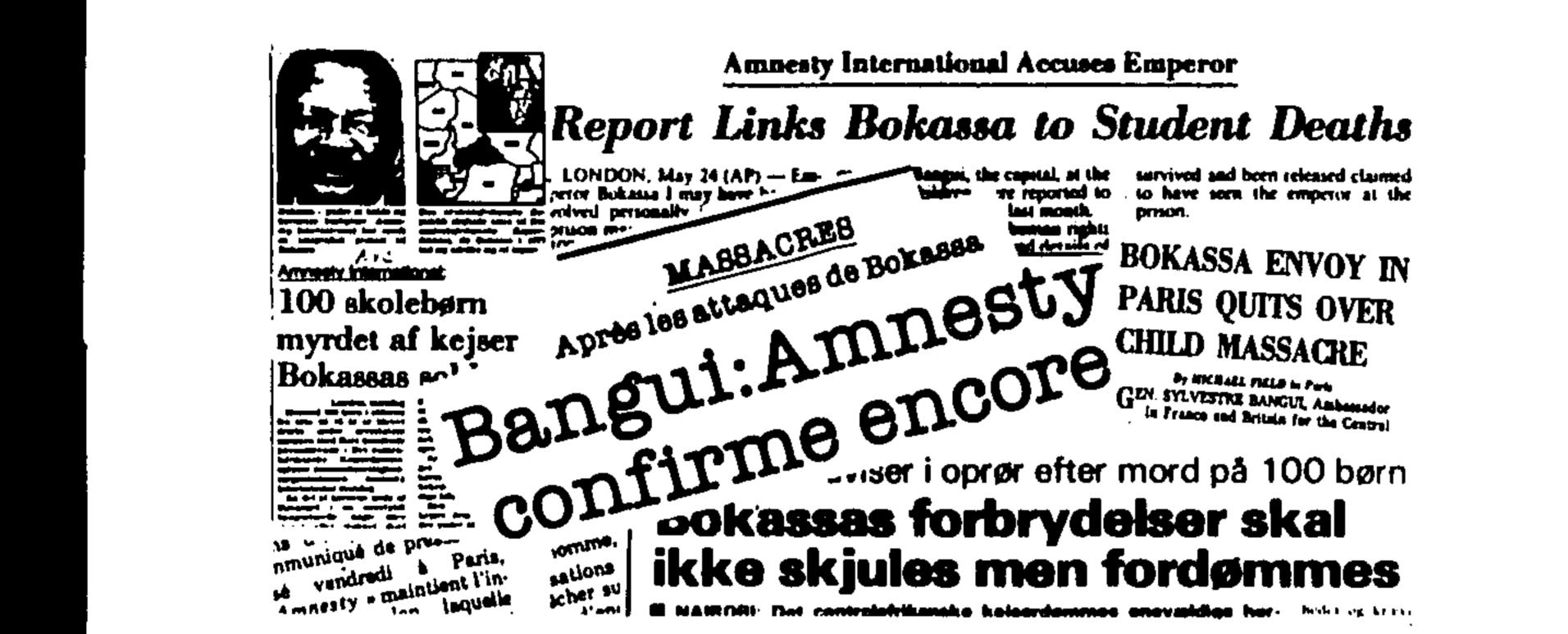
Carlos Patricio was 13 years of age when he was detained on 13 October 1973 in his home in Santiago, Chile.

A few days before his arrest, he had been taken by his mother to a juvenile court after an accident in which another child playing with Carlos Patricio was wounded by a pistol shot.

The judge sent him to a reformatory from which he escaped, claiming he had been threatened and sexually assaulted by older boys. His mother wanted to return him to the court but the boy was ill with a fever. He remained in bed until the morning of 13 October when a group of soldiers and policemen surrounded the house. Two policemen, four soldiers and two civilians broke into the house and demanded that his mother hand over the boy. Without accepting the mother's explanations, the two policemen pulled the child out of bed. One of them hit him in the chest with the butt of his rifle, knocking him to the ground. The boy was then taken to the Santiago National Football Stadium where he was placed with the political prisoners who had already been taken there after the coup.

His mother's pleas were in vain. Carlos Patricio was last seen in the prison camp of the Mounted Infantry Regiment No. 3 of Sen Filipe. But a search of the camp proved useless, as did inquiries about the boy at police stations and military regiments. No trace of the boy's whereabouts could be obtained despite repeated appeals by his mother to the authorities from 13 October 1973 to 6 September 1976. On that day the Chilean government informed the United Nations Human Rights Commission that the person in question "had no legal existence".

Señora Oyarce died of cancer on 22 November 1977 without further news of her son.



The Central African Empire briefly became the focus of world attention during 1979 after Amnesty International condemned the killing and merciless treatment of hundreds of school children who were arrested in April.

The children, aged between 8 and 16, had originally protested in January against new regulations compelling them to purchase and wear government uniforms. At the time the students had not been paid their study grants and many of the school children's fathers who were employed by the government had not received their wages for several months.

The protest about the uniforms therefore grew into a broader protest against the government's management of the country's economy. Students and school children also began demanding the restoration of the Republic (the Central African Empire was the Central African Republic until Jean Bedel Bokassa made himself Emperor in December 1976).

The January demonstrations in the capital city, Bangui, were followed by protests in the provinces, and by numerous arrests. The arrest of four students in early April resulted in a students' and school children's strike on 9 April.

By mid-April young people began stoning government cars, including that of the Emperor. On 18, 19 and 20 April the Imperial Guard, which functions under the personal command of the Emperor, searched homes for children involved in the protests and took large numbers into custody.

More than a hundred children are known to have been taken on 18 April to Bangui's central Ngaragba Prison where they were held in such crowded

"... the indiscriminate repression that the general public attributes to the National Guard against all males between 14 and 21 years of age has resulted in a constant threat not only against the personal freedom of these persons but even, in some cases, threats against their lives. This has forced their relatives to hide them on farms or send them out of the country. This has created a state of anguish according to the denunciations received by the Commission. Many heads of families — especially the mothers — are coerced by the National Guard to hand over their sons that have not yet been arrested, under the threat of death to those sons or husbands already arrested."

Report on the situation of human rights in Nicaragua, Organization of American States, 1978

conditions that in one cell alone between 12 and 28 of them were reported to have suffocated to death.

Other children were reported to have been stoned by members of the Imperial Guard to punish them for throwing stones at the Emperor's car. Some were bayonetted or beaten to death with sharpened sticks and whips. One boy was reported by a survivor to have been killed with the pocket knife he was carrying in his pocket when he was seized by the Imperial Guard.

Amnesty International has received reliable reports that between 50 and 100 children were killed in prison. One witness said he had counted the bodies of 62 dead children.

Several days later Emperor Bokassa described himself at a public function in Bangui as "the father and protector of children" and said that the remaining children in prison would be released. As international protests grew over the reports of the killings, he denied that any such deaths had occurred but later admitted that some "grown-up youths" had been killed.

High—level confirmation of the killings came from an unexpected source. General Sylvestre Bangui, Ambassador in France and the United Kingdom for the Central African Empire, called a news conference at his embassy in Paris on 22 May to announce his resignation as ambassador and to reveal eye-witness descriptions of the killings.

Students and children in Ethiopia have, for several years, been victims of political arrest, torture and killing under the country's Provisional Military Government, the *Derg*, which came to power in 1974. Students in Ethiopia have a tradition of radical political protest, developed in opposition to the government of Emperor Haile Selassie under which they were frequently subjected to arbitrary arrest and torture. Many have also opposed the policies of the Provisional Military Government, and have met a similar fate.

One of the worst incidents known to Amnesty International took place on 29 April 1977 when soldiers and paramilitary guards in Addis Ababa attacked

gatherings of students and other young people at night on suspicion that they were preparing a May Day demonstration against the Derg. It is estimated that about 500 young people were killed that night. The Secretary General of the Swedish Save the Children Fund, Håkan Landelius, reported: "One thousand children have been massacred in Addis Ababa and their bodies, lying in the streets, are ravaged by roving hyenas... The bodies of murdered children, mostly aged from 11 to 13 years, can be seen heaped on the roadside when one leaves Addis Ababa".

In November 1977 Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the chairman of the Derg, ordered that "Red Terror" should be inflicted on "counter-revolutionaries" in response to assassinations which the Derg claimed had taken the lives of many government officials since October 1976. The "Red Terror" campaign lasted from November 1977 to June 1978. It involved mass arrests of students and young people as well as the systematic use of torture and the summary execution of large numbers of these young people. Summary executions frequently took place in public places at night, with the victims' bodies being displayed with placards warning, "This was a counter-revolutionary", "The Red Terror will flourish". Victims' relatives were ordered, at times, to join in public condemnation of those killed. At other times they were permitted to purchase the bodies for burial - "paying for the bullet", as it was called.

It has been estimated that about 5,000 young people aged between 12 and 25 years were killed in Addis Ababa during the "Red Terror", particularly between December 1977 and February 1978, when killings and imprisonment reached a peak, and when about 100 or more were reported killed each night. In early 1978 the campaign spread to other towns and rural areas too, although by May bodies were rarely seen exposed in the streets of the capital and many of those arrested had been released. In June 1978 the government ended its reference to "Red Terror", but similar practices have been reported in Ethiopia since then.

Just prior to the January 1979 Conference of Latin American Bishops San Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero issued a decree in which he suspended all religious services in his country following the killing of young catechists by security forces.

On the weekend of 20 January a Roman Catholic priest, Father Octaviano Ortiz Luna, had gathered together some 40 young people between the ages of 12 and 19 for a Christian study program. Security forces broke into their meeting house at dawn and carried out arrests and killings. Father Octaviano and David Alberto Caballero, Jorge Alberto Gómez, Roberto Orellana and Angel Morales - all boys - were shot dead.

The government-controlled press published photographs of the dead, announcing the liquidation of a nest of guerrillas.

The remaining young people were charged with preparing subversive material and with opposing authority. Following widespread protests, they were released from custody.

Brutality





Details in the photograph on the right are almost indistinguishable. The picture was taken during the autopsy on Joel Filartiga Speratti, the 17-year-old son of the Paraguayan doctor, painter and philanthropist, Dr. Joel Holden Filártiga. On the night of 30 March 1976, the boy was abducted from his home and tortured to death by the police. The evidence that he died from torture includes medical certificates indicating that the wounds and burns on his body are similar to those resulting from severe beating and torture with electric shock equipment. Dr. Filartiga is well-known for his assistance to the rural poor and for his

The torture and cruel treatment of prisoners is a gross violation of international human rights standards. It is outlawed by the Geneva Conventions regulating military conduct and it is prohibited by the International Bill of Human Rights. It has also been condemned by all member states of the United Nations as a denial of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

opposition to the political repression under the dictatorship in Paraguay.

It is difficult to contemplate the deliberate infliction of systematic pain upon an infant or young person. Yet it is clear from the evidence accumulated by Amnesty International that school children - and babies - are not protected from torture or the threat of it.

After the disturbances in Soweto in 1976 young people gathered at Johannesburg's John Vorster Square in September to ask for the release of their imprisoned school friends. Four hundred of the demonstrators were arrested. Kwezi Kadalie, who was imprisoned in a cellar with 150 other children and young people, gave the following account: "We squatted on the ground in front of a concrete wall with hands at the back of our necks, while 12 policemen

guarded us with automatic pistols ready to fire. Interrogations lasted from nine to 24 hours without pause, while the prisoners, who had to kneel, were punched with clenched fists in the face and were also kicked. I was witness to some prisoners having to kneel for six days without sleep and food. One prisoner had to stand up under interrogation, which lasted 24 days, with only six hours pause during the day. We were also threatened with 'you could easily disappear — you could be so unlucky as to fall downstairs and break your neck.'"

Another boy who was arrested later that year was moved to Modderbee Prison. His mother visited him there, and under oath she reported that he had been attacked by three policemen when he was dragged into a police car. When she visited him in prison his face was so swollen that he could not eat.

Amnesty International has received personal accounts of two police raids in September 1978 at the Cross Roads Emergency Camp, during which 800 people were arrested. A 14-year-old boy gave the following account: "I met the police at the entrance to the camp. They hit me with an electric baton and I fell down. They kept hitting me all the way to the van. The took me to Manenburg where a policeman was writing down our names. When I told him that I was 14 years old he said I am telling lies and I am 17 years, and he wrote 17 years in the files. I am a scholar and am 14 years."

In Ecuador, members of a family of Shuar Indians from the Amazon jungle were arrested in November 1978 and charged with the murder of a cattle merchant. The sons of the Tsamaraint family, Cruz (15 years old), Jorge (16), and Fidel, their older sister Silvia and her infant son Ernesto were all arrested.

The young Indians were charged with having planned and executed a murder, and are reported to have been forced to confess to the alleged crime under torture.

They are reported to have had their fingers broken under torture and the two younger brothers have been threatened with being burnt alive. Their older brother, Fidel, was arrested on 1 December 1978 after the two younger brothers are reported to have been compelled under torture to sign blank papers that were later filled in to incriminate Fidel and another family member in the crime.

In its 1977 report on political imprisonment in Indonesia, Amnesty International cited the case of Sri Ambar, the former leader of the women's section of the Indonesian Trade Union Federation. She escaped arrest after the attempted coup of 1965 but was taken prisoner at the end of 1966. During her interrogation she was accused of having participated in the publication and distribution of an underground newspaper and of trying to help the families of political prisoners.

Sri Ambar's daughters, both in their early teens, were also arrested. One daughter was tortured in the presence of her mother. Afterwards she was taken away by a military officer and it is reported that she has not been seen since. One of the few Indonesian political prisoners who has been brought to trial and sentenced, Sri Ambar is due for release in 1981.

There have been reports of young people being assaulted by security forces in Northern Ireland. In August 1977 13-year-old Brian McCabe was reported to

haven been beaten on the head, back and legs by British soldiers on the street before being taken into custody for questioning. He later stated that while in custody he had been punched and had his head banged against a wall.

A 13-year-old girl who was alone when British soldiers broke into her home has since suffered from blackouts and insomnia after they placed the barrel of an automatic weapon against her head and abused her.

The mother of Tamara, a child of three, described, after they left Chile, the treatment her daughter received in detention: "They undressed my little daughter and whipped her with a leather whip. They put her in a barrel with ice water and held her head under the water until she almost drowned. They threatened to rape her and whipped her again. This was repeated four times a day for four days."

Disappearances

"In spite of one year and 10 months of ceaseless and desperate searching, my granddaughter has still not been found. I have been to police stations, magistrates' courts... orphanages and military regiments. I have talked to members of the church, civilian personalities in various neighbourhoods. All without result. Clara Anahí, who is now over two years old, has not reappeared; no one has explained the cause of her disappearance."



Despite censorship and the risk of retaliation, the families of people who have disappeared in Argentina have increased their campaign to press the government for information about their missing relatives. Those who have been abducted include pregnant women, teenagers and infants.

This extract from the testimony of the grandmother of Clara Anahí Mariani of Argentina highlights a distressing development which has been documented by Amnesty International: the abduction of children. The children may be arrested individually or together with their parents. Amnesty International is also aware of cases of children who have been born in prison and who have subsequently disappeared while the mother has remained in custody.

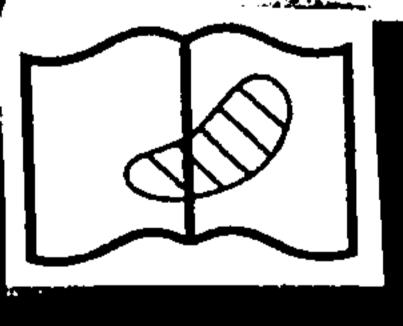


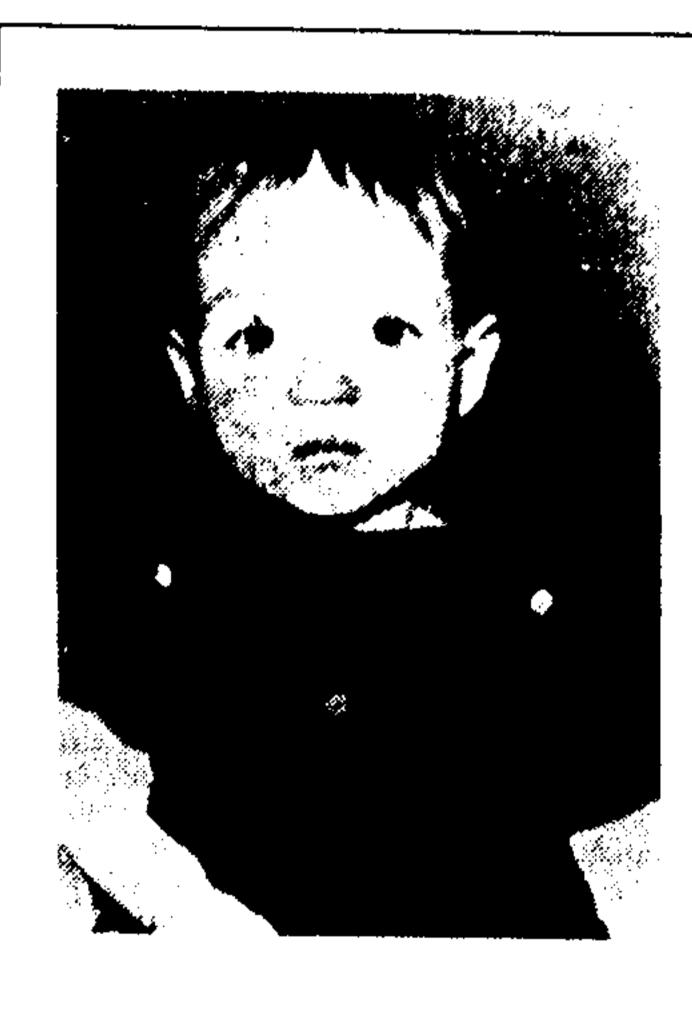
This is Amaral García Hernández. If he is still alive he is eight years old. But since November 1974 his whereabouts have been unknown. In November 1974. when he was three years old, he was abducted with his father and grandfather from his home in Sarratea Street in Buenos Aires where they were living in exile after escaping the political repression in their home country, Uruguay. He and the two men were taken into the custody of Argentina's Federal Police. Just over a month later, on 20 December, the bodies of

Clara Anahí Mariani was three months old when she disappeared in November 1976 after her parents were killed in an anti-subversive operation conducted by the Argentinian Combined Forces. After the raid, although the little girl's name was not on the list of the dead, none of the military or local authorities would divulge information about the child's whereabouts.

On 14 December 1978 the Argentinian police announced that 40 children in their custody had been returned to their homes or placed in institutions. No further details were given. There are unconfirmed reports that abducted infants have been given new identities and sent for adoption.

the two men were found on the outskirts of Uruguay's capital city, Montevideo. Their corpses bore marks of torture and bullet wounds.





This is Carla Rutilo Artes from Bolivia. Her mother, Graciela, is Argentinian but has lived in Bolivia since she was nine years of age.

On 2 April 1976 both mother and daughter were arrested by the Bolivian Police, taken to the capital city, La Paz, and separated. The mother was held in the Ministry of the Interior where it is alleged that she was subjected to torture. Her daughter Carla was sent to an orphanage where she was registered under a false name.

On 26 August 1976 Carla was removed from the orphanage and three days later both mother and child were handed over to Argentinian authorities at the border of the two countries. There had been no formal extradition order.

Relatives of the family state that the mother had no known political affiliation. The sole motive for the arrest would appear to be her support, as a representative of a students' organization, for the Bolivian tin miners' strike.

To date there has been no news of the whereabouts of either mother or child.

Born in prison



These two children were born in prison. Their father has disappeared. Both parents were detained in 1976 under state of siege legislation which gave the authorities power to detain individuals indefinitely without charge or trial. The father is one of a number of people in the country whose disappearance after arrest has been documented by Aninesty International. The government says the father is dead. The mother and children have been released: to protect them from possible reprisals, Amnesty International is not publishing their names or identifying the country. Efforts are still being made to ascertain the fate of the father.

Amnesty International is aware of similar cases in other countries. Particularly disturbing are accounts

of threats made to pregnant women in custody or actual brutality being inflicted upon them. The Amnesty International mission that visited the Republic of the Philippines in 1975 reported the case of a pregnant woman arrested with her husband and beaten in the military detention center, Camp Crame. Her husband's interrogators threatened to rape his wife and kill the foetus in the womb. The child was born in detention.

Amnesty International does not argue that children born in these circumstances should be taken away from their parents. But the effect of prison life on both the mother and child is such that Amnesty International, in all cases with which it is concerned, urges the release of mother and child on humanitarian grounds.

A released political prisoner from Argentina has described to Amnesty International the torture to which she was subjected prior to childbirth. She was tortured with electric shocks, beaten on her abdomen with an iron bar, kicked, sexually humiliated and threatened with death. The electrical torture was supervised by a doctor.

She gave birth to a son in prison. During labour, which lasted for about five

hours, she was tied to a bed by her hands and feet and was completely unattended until the last few minutes. Her newborn baby was forced to sleep on the floor of the cell.

Mother and son were released from prison six months later. Both have been examined by Amnesty International doctors. They found the mother to be suffering from impaired memory, difficulty in concentrating, nervousness, headaches, dizziness and vaginal discharge since delivery of the baby. Miraculously her baby showed normal mental and physical development at the time of examination.

Separation

Children can be separated from their parents in numerous ways. Amnesty International is aware of cases of the arrest of children – even infants – who have

been snatched from their parents in order to bring pressure on the family. The children may be held in official custody or may "disappear".

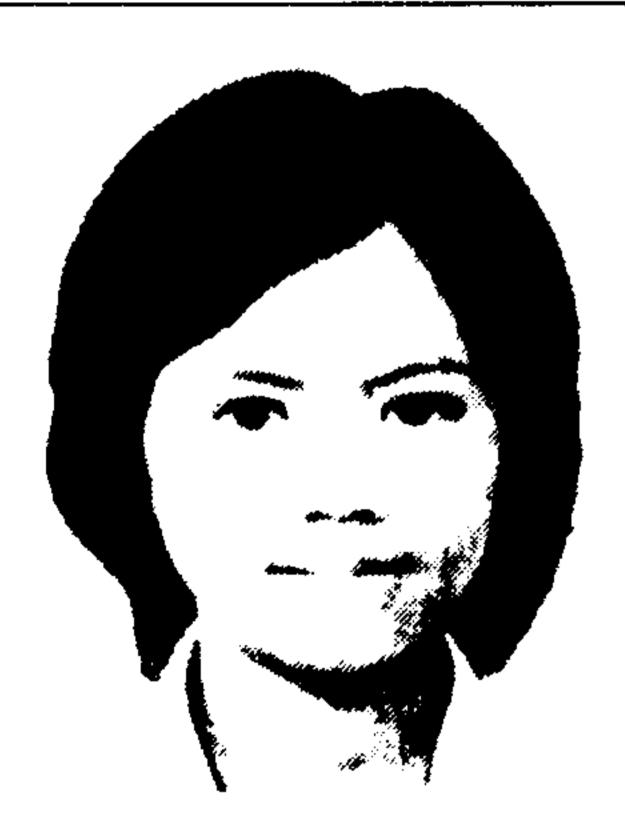
The most common cause of separation, however, is the arrest or abduction of one or both parents, frequently amounting to an economic catastrophe for the spouse and children.

Even more painful, though, is the emotional stress that is caused by the splitting of the family - sometimes for five, 10 or 15 years. The arrest or disappearance of either the mother or father can occur at a time when the child is most impressionable; the imprisonment may stretch through the formative years of childhood; the early years of a child's life may be marked by the continuous search for a missing father or mother; the child may grow up in the care of a state children's home or with another family — only to have a parent later return after years in a prison camp.

In some cases children are not permitted to visit their parents in prison. An Amnesty International mission that visited The Republic of the Philippines in 1975 reported that one of the women prisoners they had interviewed had never received a visit from her parents-in-law or her three-year-old son. The boy's father had also been arrested and, like his wife, had been denied visits by the son. Both parents made detailed testimonies



A young girl is re-united with her father after his release in 1977 from a colony for political prisoners on Indonesia's Buru Island. The first batch of 2,500 prisoners were secretly transported to Buru before the government made the existence of the camp public in 1969. None of the prisoners had been charged or tried. The girl in the picture has become a teenager during the years her father spent in detention.



This is Linda Zahari of Singapore. She was born three months after her father was detained in 1963 under Singapore's Internal Security Act. Until 1978 he remained in detention without charge or trial, suspected of being a communist sympathizer. During those 15 years, he was offered release four times on condition that he make "confessions" over the state-run television. He refused.

In early 1976 his daughter told a human rights convention:

"My name is Linda. My mother's name is Salmah. My father's name is Said Zahari. I am already 13 years old but I haven't felt my father's kisses. I haven't been cuddled by him. Because at the time I was born, my father was imprisoned. When I visit my father in prison I can only speak to him through a telephone. We are not allowed to be close."

to the Amnesty International mission of the torture to which they had been subjected. Neither knew the reason for their arrest and neither had been tried.

Parents and children belonging to religious communities in the Soviet Union face official repression through the deprivation of parental rights.

The decree "On Religious Associations" permits religious activities only by congregations which have been officially registered. Many congregations, however, refuse to register under the conditions laid down by this decree or have had their application for registration rejected. One of the conditions of the decree is that religious congregations are forbidden "to organize special gatherings of children, young people or women for prayer or other purposes".

Those families which violate the decree can be — and sometimes are — subjected to deprivation of parental rights whereby the state removes the children from the family if the parents have "neglected their duties" under USSR family law. Numerous cases have been reported over the years to Annesty International of Baptists, Pentecostalists and Adventists having had some or all of their children taken into state care. In some cases children are reported to have gone into hiding to avoid being taken away.

In a number of cases this law has been applied against parents charged with "violations of the laws on separation of church and state and of school and church" or other offences, so that the parents are subjected both to imprisonment and removal of their children



This is Nina Mikhel and her two children. They live in the settlement of Enem in the Krasnodar territory of the Soviet Union. Because they are Adventists, Saturday is a holy day for them and the children do not go to school. The children learn the lessons they have missed and do their homework. The mother has been fined and the two children, Misha and Nadya, have been threatened at school with being taken from their mother and put into a boarding school.



René Meibohm's parents, Gisela and Winfried, applied for more than three years to emigrate from the German Democratic Republic in order to care for René's grandmother who lives in West Berlin. In late 1978 René, aged 14, wrote to his grandmother: "Mum and Dad have been arrested. One of my teachers brought me to the town hall where a lady took care of me. She brought me home and I had to pack my school books. Then I was taken to a home for children. I don't know where Mum and Dad are." He is now known to be living with his elder sister and has located his parents.

'That's my son,' she cried

(extract from an Amnesty International report on Indonesia, published in 1973)

Mrs S. had been under detention for several years because of her associations with the left-wing women's organization, Gerwani. Her husband had been murdered in Jakarta shortly after the coup attempt and, ironically for her, had been buried at the Heroes' cemetery in Jakarta because his death was thought to have been the result of an attack by communist youths. When she was arrested she took one small child with her to prison and left her other children with relatives. The relatives never visited her and she had no news of her children.

One day some years after her arrest she, together with several other women prisoners, was carrying garbage out of the prison where she was being held in Jakarta when, glancing towards the crowded streets, she suddenly began to scream: "Narto! Narto". The prison commander who was guarding the women prisoners on garbage duty asked her why she was shouting.

"That's my son," she cried.

The Commander saw the boy and began to run after him. The boy, seeing a soldier running after him, took to his heels and fled. Many startled bystanders joined in the chase; the boy was soon caught and the commander took him back to the prison. Only then did the child realize that his own mother had been calling him.

She embraced him and carried him into the prison. She was torn between joy at finding her child after years of separation and anger at seeing him in such a wretched condition. Nothing could more poignantly have depicted the tragedy of so many families torn asunder by political events for which they are not responsible.

After bathing and dressing her son in her own clothes, the mother discovered that he had been staying with an uncle who had found the responsibility of looking after him too burdensome and had made life a misery. The boy had run away and had been living on the streets for weeks, begging and sleeping under railway carriages in sidings.

For some months he remained in prison with his mother until a visiting priest found a place for him with another family and he was able to start going to school again.

Consequences

The impact of political imprisonment leaves its mark on children both physically and psychologically. Children who have been victims of incarceration or brutal treatment develop long-term symptoms caused by the inexplicable terror.

When political imprisonment is inflicted upon a family, it is often the breadwinner who is taken away. This results in obvious economic deprivation for the dependants, sometimes interrupting the schooling of the children. Thembinkosi Makhena of Zimbabwe was nine years old in 1974 when a Swedish group of Amnesty International received a letter from his father. The father had been interned in a camp and was worried about his son who lived with his elderly grandmother. Thembinkosi's mother was dead. Thembinkosi and his grandmother had been living of what she could sell at the local market, largely vegetables. When the grandmother fell ill the boy was forced to live in complete poverty.

Prisoners of conscience in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), most of whom wish to emigrate, have the opportunity of doing so upon their release under a special scheme operating between their government and the government of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany).

The children of these prisoners are usually allowed to leave the German Democratic Republic and join their parents but often only after months of anxious waiting. In a few cases reported in the foreign news media — a total of 10 children — the authorities of the German Democratic Republic have refused to allow the children to leave. These children have been placed in state homes or with foster families.

In one instance an architect and his wife tried to escape with their two children to Austria via Czechoslovakia. They failed and both parents were sentenced to 2 years' and 10 months' imprisonment.

The children were taken away from the parents and their attempts to stay in touch with their parents were in vain. The parents were allowed to emigrate to West Berlin in 1975 but their frequent requests to have the children sent out of the German Democratic Republic to join them have been refused by the authorities. The children, in the meantime, have been adopted by another couple.

Amnesty International has learned of no cases of forced adoption during the last two years. However there have been cases in which the authorities of the German Democratic Republic have shown great reluctance in letting children join their parents in exile and have only granted permission after many months have elapsed.

The story of Loyiso

Loyiso is the daughter of Barney and Dimza Pityana who have spent a total of at least ten years under banning orders in South Africa. They have also been held for many periods of three months or longer under administrative detention orders. The family, now in exile, has told Amnesty International of the impact that political imprisonment and banning had on their daughter. According to Barney Pityana.

"The first time I was banned, Loyiso was two years old....

"On several occasions between 1974 and 1977 Loyiso saw her mother or me fetched by the police. Each time she reacted more and more strongly and cried hysterically. On two occasions when we were both imprisoned, we had to leave her with families in the neighbourhood, as we had no relatives who could look after her. These families neglected the child, she was harshly treated and her clothing and food were inadequate. She began stealing small amounts, became very aggressive and did badly at school. When I came out of prison I found that Loyiso had lost a lot of weight and that her whole personality was much changed. She was quarrelsome, unbalanced and very reserved, and she also cried a lot.

"When we were home between imprisonment we noticed that Loyiso was always terrified that the security police would come and arrest us. She was also afraid that they might take her, as a policeman had once told her it would be necessary to place her in an institution for children. This never actually happened, but it made a deep impression on her. During the periods when we were banned, she became exaggeratedly apprehensive that we might not reach home by the appointed time. In a manner of speaking our banning was like a banning for her, as she was unable to take part in many activities to which we would have accompanied her."

In addition to hardship of this extreme character, children often share with great sensitivity the anxiety of their parents. Since 1976, a team of concerned medical doctors working within Amnesty International have been studying the problems of children who have been exposed to imprisonment and torture — either because they have suffered themselves or because their parents have been victims.

The medical group includes specialists in children's diseases, a psychologist and a psychiatrist, as well as a social adviser and a nurse. The group has concentrated on examining Chilean children now living in Denmark.

The medical group has examined the background and health of each child before he or she left Chile, including details of each child's experience, imprisonment and torture, periods of separation from one or both parents and the child's reaction to the events. Each child is examined by one of the doctors and, in cases of serious psychological problems, by one of the psychiatrists. The parents and their other children are also offered help by a psychologist

and psychiatrist. The examination also includes information about the families' housing, education, and work, including possible problems on the job or in school.

The study has covered 58 children. A significant number of these children show serious psychosomatic symptoms owing to the imprisonment and torture of one or both parents. Twenty-one children (36%) are very nervous: noise such as cars braking or people speaking loudly makes many of the children cry. A similar number of children have difficulty in falling asleep or have their sleep interrupted by nightmares about police, soldiers, murder, and death. Many of the children walk in their sleep.

Bedwetting in the case of previously clean children has occurred with 13 children (22%), while 10 children (17%) have become introverted and depressed with subsequent difficulty in establishing contact with other children. Another 10 children (17%) have developed aggressive behaviour. Several children have complained about headaches, aversion to food, and difficulties in concentrating and remembering; some have repeated stomach aches and nervous constipation.

The initial findings of the medical group suggest that these children will have serious — perhaps life-long — social and physical problems as a result of their weakened mental condition. The extent to which the traumas experienced by the children will affect them, depends in each case on the type and duration of the trauma and on each child's individual constitution. What is clear is that the ill-treatment they have experienced will influence, in all likelihood, not only the present generation, but also subsequent generations.

The examination is not yet completed. The medical group is considering publishing a detailed report after their research is concluded, probably at the end of 1979. Similar symptoms as those observed by the doctors in the cases of these children may also be observed, to a lesser extent, in other refugee children.

"Our family has 9 children. Our eldest brother Pavlik serves in the Army. The youngest is one year and seven months. Our mother and father are believing Christians. We are all Christians too and want to become like our father and mother when we grow up.

We ask you to take a decision to stop the persecution of our father and mother. Make it possible for our father to work in the church and live with us. Make it possible for our mother to live in peace with us. She does not need examination in a psychiatric hospital.

Allow us to live in peace with our parents."

- from a letter written to President Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union on 10 June 1978 by the nine children of Galina Yurevna Rytikova. She had been threatened with a psychiatric examination. The family belongs to the Baptist faith.

Sentenced to death

The death penalty is an extreme case of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. It is capable of being inflicted on the innocent —— and is irreversible.

World public opinion was provoked on this question in 1977 when a 14-year-old boy was sentenced to death in Malaysia under the country's Internal Security Act which makes the death penalty mandatory in cases of illegal possession of firearms. During the trial the schoolboy claimed he had been given a sum of money by a gangster who asked him to keep it in a plastic bag. The gangster threatened to beat him if he opened the bag. The boy, who maintained he did not know the bag contained a pistol, said he took the bag and the money because he was destitute after having run away 🛴 from home.



Amnesty International and other humanitarian organizations made public and private appeals to the Malaysian government in an effort to prevent the execution and obtain a pardon for the boy. On 14 October 1977 the death sentence was commuted by Malaysia's Pardons Board and it was decided he should be sent to a juvenile reform school until he is 21.

Amnesty International has also received reports of minors being sentenced to death in Iraq, although the country's penal code prohibits the execution of anyone under 18 years of age.

Khoshnaw Muhammad Amin, a Kurd from Suleimaniya, was sentenced to death with nine others in 1977 after the Special Court of Kirkuk held them responsible for an assassination attempt on the Governor of Suleimaniya. Khoshnaw Muhammad Amin is reported to have been 14 years of age at the time. Trials before such Special Courts in Iraq are held in secret. The prisoners are always held incommunicado until after the trial is completed. They have no lawyer at the trial and no right of appeal.

After appeals by his family, Khoshnaw Muhammad Amin's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment — a sentence he is now believed to be serving in Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

Amnesty International has received details of another three cases in which young Kurds have been executed in Iraq.

Help

Every day Amnesty International and other humanitarian organizations are at work — trying to prevent violations of human rights and doing whatever is possible to help the victims. The work of Amnesty International is based on the voluntary efforts of tens of thousands of people in countries all over the world who contribute their own time and money to campaign against political imprisonment, torture and executions. Amnesty International volunteers work to mobilize international public opinion — you are probably reading this publication as a result of their efforts. The outrage that people everywhere feel at the cruelty and injustice suffered by political prisoners is then channelled into constructive action.

The most important task is to end the injustice, to get prisoners of conscience immediately released from prison, to end the long years of detention without trial that so many political prisoners face, to protest the use of torture and to rescue prisoners threatened with death.



These are the children of Ginger Gondokondo, imprisoned thirteen years ago in Zimbabwe. Although he is now released, like the other political prisoners held with him he is still under surveillance and his home is subject to nighttime police raids. An Amnesty International adoption group worked for years for his release and has provided assistance to his four school age children. The books the children are holding in this photograph were provided to them by the Amnesty International group.

How will this help the children? Because, as the information in this publication shows, in many cases it is children themselves who are the prisoners and it is often their cries that echo in the torture cells of so many countries.

If it is the parents who are arrested, then by working for the release of the mothers and fathers Amnesty International is also working to bring families back together and to end the economic and emotional impact of the separation.

Amnesty International is conducting medical research into the special problems of children and families who have suffered the consequences of imprisonment and torture. The purpose of the research is to be able to find out better ways of helping in the rehabilitation of victims, many of whom are sent into exile from their countries bearing with them the long-term effects of their ordeal.

Amnesty International also provides relief assistance to families when the breadwinner has been taken prisoner. Amnesty International members may provide funds for medical care or schooling. Books, medicines and clothing may be sent to a family that has been left destitute.

We are under no illusions about the enormous challenge facing us. In some countries people who have tried to take action on these problems in their own countries face arrest. In such cases international action becomes imperative.

In April of International Year of the Child a group of Guatemalan women were arrested at the country's international airport for distributing leaflets. The leaflets were calling attention to the fact that a trade union leader was taking a flight out of the country that day after being threatened with assassination by a pro-government paramilitary group. His small son was reported to have been detained by the police in order to intimidate the father further. The women who were protesting against this immoral violence inflicted on the child and his father were taken to Guatemala City's prison for dangerous and common law prisoners.

Amnesty International members in numerous countries responded to this news with urgent telegrams requesting the government to release them. Soon after, the Guatemalan Minister of Labour informed one of Amnesty International's groups that the women had been freed. Both the father and son who had been the object of the women's concern are now living abroad in exile.

We can only hope to succeed in such efforts if enough people all over the world are prepared to help us.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of Amnesty International, contact the International Secretariat at 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, England. If there is a local Amnesty International group in your area or a national section in your country, contact them. No matter what you have to offer — information, an idea, a skill, a donation, an hour of your time — it can be put to use in the international struggle for human rights.