

Women in prison

1977
Prisoners of
Conscience Year

amnesty
international



Two years ago, during International Woman's Year, Amnesty International issued a list of 252 women imprisoned in 25 countries. The list was by no means exhaustive, since it included only those cases which had been taken up for adoption or investigation by AI — a mere fraction of the thousands of women imprisoned throughout the world on account of their religious or political beliefs, or their ethnic origin. Many of those on the list had not been charged or tried. Some had been tortured.

In publishing the list, AI did not seek to argue that the prisoners named in it were imprisoned or restricted because they were women. Rather, the size of the list indicated the growing extent of women's participation in the political process, and their active concern at the political, social and economic conditions in their own societies. Yet the fact that they were women was directly relevant to their suffering, making them especially vulnerable to the torture and mal-

treatment inflicted alike on male and female prisoners, and giving a particular significance to the enforced separation from children and family suffered by all political prisoners.

The 1975 list was symbolic of AI's work on behalf of women prisoners of conscience. Since its publication AI has continued to take up on a massive scale the cases of women imprisoned in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition to women who have been political activists, the organization has helped other prisoners of conscience who have concerned themselves directly with women's rights, either through political action, as in Spain, or through education and welfare programs designed to improve the status of women within their own society, as in Indonesia. A third category of women prisoners are those detained not as a result of their own activities, but because their husbands or close relatives are sought by the police. These prisoners are in some instances held hostages



against the voluntary surrender of their male relatives. Finally, there are the rare cases of women who are restricted or detained because they are women; here the example of Nasreen Mohamed Hussein of Zanzibar illustrates the tragedy of forced marriage used as a political weapon.

The suffering of women political prisoners, like that of their male counterparts, sheds light on varying systems of repression. In Africa, women have suffered long-term detention without trial in countries as diverse as Mali, Malawi and Ethiopia — in the last case the imprisoned women include both members of the former royal family overthrown by the armed forces in 1974, and suspected left-wingers. In South Africa, women nationalists such as Winnie Mandela (whose husband is serving a life-sentence for political offences) have been subjected to detention or restricted to virtual house arrest under "banning" orders.



Nasreen Mohamed Hussein
In 1970 Nasreen, a schoolgirl of 14 years, was abducted from her parents by soldiers and forcibly married to a Zanzibar security official. She and 5 other girls, like her, of Arab-Persian ancestry, became the forced brides of members and associates of the ruling Zanzibar Revolutionary Council.

Nasreen has been under virtual house arrest since then, forbidden for long periods to communicate

with relatives or friends. She suffered reprisals when three of the young women escaped to Iran in 1973. She refuses to accept the 'marriage' and has frequently complained of the cruelty of her 'husband', Ali Foum.

Nasreen has been an AI Prisoner of Conscience since 1971. AI appeals to the Tanzanian authorities have been countered by the claim that she is 'happily married'. This is contradicted by reports that she suffers from depression and pleads to be reunited with her family in Iran. Marriage without the full and free consent of either intending spouse contravenes Islamic Law, Tanzanian law, Swahili customary law and article 16(2) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Luisa Segura — Argentina
Luisa Segura is a member of the youth wing of the **Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores** (Socialist Workers Party — PST), a non-violent left wing political party. She was arrested in November 1974 together with a number of other student leaders.

Conditions at Villa Devoto prison where she is presently held have led to a steady deterioration in Luisa Segura's health; it was only

after her case had received some publicity that she received medical attention.

Luisa Segura has been held without charge or trial for over two years under State of Siege legislation, which provides for an indefinite period of detention. In October 1975, she applied to leave the country under Article 23 of the Constitution, which states that a citizen detained without trial may apply to "opt for exile". This right was suspended in March 1976 by the military government. However, The Supreme Court of Justice has recently ruled that the "option for exile" may apply in certain cases. Luisa Segura is now under consideration. Luisa Segura was adopted by Amnesty International in June 1975.



Oskana Popovych — USSR

At age 16, Oskana Popovych was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in corrective labour colonies for her Ukrainian nationalist activities. Harsh camp conditions left her physically disabled. After her release in 1955 she was forbidden to live in her native city of Ivano-Frankovsk. When she was finally allowed to return she apparently became involved with the distribution of *samizdat*.

Oskana Popovych was arrested in November 1974 and charged with "Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". She was accused of distributing *samizdat* and subsequently sentenced to 8 years in a corrective labour colony followed by 5 years exile.

At the time of her arrest, she was convalescing from an unsuccessful operation and was awaiting another. She could only move about on crutches. Ms Popovych is now serving her sentence in a corrective labour colony south of Moscow. It is reported that she is subjected to poor diet, inadequate medical care, and physical labour. Oskana Popovych was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by AI in May, 1975.

The states' treatment of female political prisoners in the Middle East and Europe has exhibited similar brutalities. Reza Baraheni, the exiled Iranian poet has testified to the brutalities inflicted on women torture victims in his country, while in the USSR, Nataliya Gorbanyevskaya is only one of a number of women prisoners of conscience who have been wrongly detained in psychiatric hospitals. In Spain, former AI-adoptees, like the feminist lawyer Lidia Falcon have begun publishing information about the special problems faced by women political prisoners.

During the POC Year AI seeks the active support of women everywhere on behalf of their imprisoned sisters throughout the world.

Numerous Latin American women are amongst those who have suffered imprisonment and often brutal torture at the hands of repressive regimes. In some countries (for

instance in Chile in the months and years following the September 1973 coup) the torture inflicted on women prisoners has frequently taken the form of sexual brutality administered by male interrogators. Women from all walks of life are amongst those persons who have "disappeared" after kidnapping by parapolice "death squads" in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Guatemala.

In Asia, AI's work for women prisoners has concentrated on Indonesia, the country with the largest known number of women political prisoners, where more than 2,000 women have been detained without trial, many of them for over eleven years. Prior to the change of government in South Vietnam in 1975, many women, who were sometimes imprisoned with their children, were among the Vietnamese prisoners of conscience adopted by AI.



Torture victim Maria Amparo Arango (Spain)

Ms Siti Suratih - Indonesia
Ms Siti Suratih continued to work as a trained nurse after her marriage to a leading member of the Indonesian Communist Party. She was known to have little interest in politics, and she did not join any political organization. After October 1965, when there was an attempted coup, for which the authorities held the Indonesian Communist Party responsible, she was dismissed from employment as head nurse in the maternity ward at Central Army Hospital.

Her husband was in hiding at the time, and she was continually harassed. A year later, she was arrested. Her relatives were unable to take care of her four children, and she was compelled to take three of them with her to the detention camp, where they stayed for several months.

When she was transferred to Bukit Duri Women's Prison in Jakarta, she was not allowed to

have her children with her. Later the children were taken into care by their aunt.

In 1971, she was transferred to Plantungan Women's Detention Camp in central Java. She is 48 years old.

These cases have been chosen by Amnesty International to illustrate the plight of women in prison. As of 15 February 1977 these are all active cases. Should they be released during POC Year facts of their detention and imprisonment nonetheless remain relevant.

What you or your women's organization can do to support P-O-C Year.

- 1 Join Amnesty International and encourage other women to do the same.
- 2 Subscribe to AI publications to be kept informed of Human Rights violations around the world.
- 3 Join the AI Urgent Action network and send telegrams in cases of extreme urgency.
- 4 Join the Prisoner of the Month scheme and send cards to selected cases of prisoners in need of help.
- 5 Organise special meetings of women around the theme "women in prison".
- 6 Sign the Petition on the reverse side which AI is presenting to the United Nations and the world's governments.
- 7 Organize special collections for POC Year at appropriate times of the year.

● I/We want to join Amnesty International and enclose £ membership fee

● Put me/us on the mailing list for Amnesty International's Newsletter during Prisoner of Conscience Year.

● Send copies of this brochure for distribution by/in my organisation

100 500 1000

● Send the following number of copies of the Petition

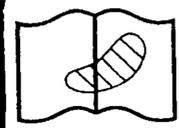
100 500 1000

● Send details of Amnesty International publications

● Send sample copies of lists and brochures of prisoners as they become available.

● I/We enclose £ as a donation. Funds are urgently needed.

Name, address and organisation (if any)



Petition

for the release of Prisoners of Conscience

During 1977 Prisoners of Conscience Year, Amnesty International supporters will be circulating the petition below. We welcome your help in obtaining signatures from colleagues and friends.

"We, the undersigned,

OUTRAGED that in many parts of the world, men and women who have neither used nor advocated violence suffer imprisonment solely because of their political or religious beliefs, their race colour, or language;

this, despite the many humane and noble declarations of the assembled nations of the world, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights three decades ago,

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS, with your signature, and return with coupon on back to: your National Section.

Name _____

Address _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Signature _____

URGE the General Assembly of the United Nations

to take swift and concrete steps to ensure strict observance in all countries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

and urge each and every government in the world

to act for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience."

If you do not belong to a National Section please return to: Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 53 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8SP, England.

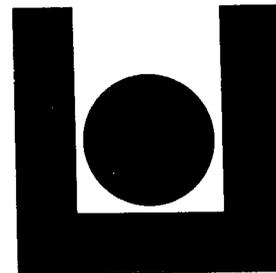
Name _____

Address _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____



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The Year 1977 has been declared Prisoners of Conscience Year. In a coordinated campaign, the groups and members of Amnesty International will seek to intensify public awareness and concern about violations of human rights wherever they occur and to bring greater support to prisoners of conscience throughout the world. Special contributions are being made by outstanding figures in the world of art, film, music, literature and design. Signatures will be collected in all countries for a petition urging: 1) the General Assembly of the United Nations "to take swift and concrete steps to ensure strict observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," and 2) urging all governments "to act for the immediate

release of all prisoners of conscience."

Funds raised during this special year will be administered under the authority of the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International and will be devoted to the strengthening of the national programs and structures of the Amnesty International movement and for capital expenditure within the International Secretariat.

During Prisoner of Conscience Year Amnesty International will be producing lists of prisoners who are adopted or investigation cases in the following categories. These lists do not include all prisoners of conscience in the relevant category.

- Trade Unionists
- Journalists/Writers
- Parliamentarians/Politicians
- Medical Personnel
- Students/Teachers/Academics

And brochures on the following topics:

- Journalists/Writers
- Parliamentarians
- Medical Profession
- Lawyers
- Business World
- Peasants
- Churches
- Trade Unionists
- Women
- Teachers and Schools
- Youth Movements

amnesty international

... is a worldwide human rights movement which is independent of any government, political faction, ideology or religious creed. It works for the release of men and women imprisoned anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin or religion, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. These are termed "prisoners of conscience".

... opposes torture and capital punishment in all cases and without reservation. It advocates fair and speedy trials for all political prisoners.

... seeks observance throughout the world of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

... has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States and has observer status with the Organization of African Unity (Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees).

... is financed by its members throughout the world, by individual subscription and by donations.