

EXTERNAL

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**AUSTRIA : THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF SABINE
GEISBERGER**

The information on this case comes from a statement made by Sabine Geisberger to the Klagenfurt police on 19 November 1995; on a criminal complaint she lodged with the Vienna prosecuting authorities on 23 November 1995; on a medical report issued by Klagenfurt Hospital (*Landeskrankenhaus Klagenfurt*) on 20 November 1995; and on an interview conducted by Amnesty International with the victim.

On the evening of Thursday, 16 November 1995, Sabine Geisberger and her boyfriend were in their Vienna flat when, at approximately 8pm, they heard a loud banging on their door. Looking through the spy-hole Sabine Geisberger saw three unknown men. As the banging on the door became more violent, Sabine Geisberger's boyfriend became so afraid that he left the flat via the bedroom window and called the police. Just afterwards the three men kicked open the door of the flat and stormed in.

Sabine Geisberger alleges that one of the men held a handgun to her face, at which point she screamed, fell to the floor and was handcuffed. The men then told her that they were police officers, although they did not show her any form of identification or authorization to enter her flat. When Sabine Geisberger told the officers that her boyfriend had fled, she was asked where "the kilos" were and whether she took drugs. Sabine Geisberger replied that there were no drugs in the flat and that her boyfriend had taken none with him. The handcuffs were taken off Sabine Geisberger and she went into the lounge where she saw that there were now four officers. One of the four men said out loud that he had found something and he put a piece of paper down on the lounge table. Sabine Geisberger states that she did not know what was on the paper, but that fearing that it might incriminate her boyfriend, she put it in her mouth and swallowed it. At that point three of the men pounced on her, knocking her to the ground. Her hands were handcuffed again, behind her back, and one of the officers grabbed her by the chin and started to force her mouth open. Sabine Geisberger voluntarily opened her mouth to show the officer there was nothing in it. Upon seeing this the officer allegedly said "Right, now we'll start playing" ("*Nun werden wir spielen!*") and dragged the 23-year-old woman by the hair into her bedroom, all the time verbally abusing her. Sabine Geisberger alleges that the officer threw her into the corner of the room, between the bookcase and the bed, and shut the door. He then deliberately kicked

her in the genitals causing her to scream with pain. Sabine Geisberger alleges that over the next 20 minutes the officer kicked her several times more in the same area of her body. He then ordered her to stand in the corner of the room, which she tried to do before falling to the ground again in pain. The officer then took hold of her by the shoulders, pulled her up and pushed her into the corner of the room. In the criminal complaint which she has lodged with the Vienna prosecuting authorities Sabine Geisberger gives a detailed description of the officer who she alleges assaulted her.

The police officers continued their search of the flat, at one stage finding several small bottles of methadone - a drug used as a substitute in treating heroin addiction. Sabine Geisberger states that she had already told them the bottles were in the fridge and that they belonged to her boyfriend. After removing her handcuffs the officers took Sabine Geisberger out of the flat and placed her in a police car. She states that at no time was she informed that she was being arrested or why she was being taken away. After driving to where her car was parked and searching it, the officers took Sabine Geisberger into police custody. She was detained overnight and questioned the following afternoon. Sabine Geisberger states that she was not allowed to telephone her sister from her place of detention in order to inform her what had happened. She was eventually released at around 5pm. The next day she was examined by a doctor from the gynaecological department of Klagenfurt Hospital. According to a medical report of her examination, Sabine Geisberger suffered bruising to the rim of her pelvis, left thigh, and to her genitals (*“Haematome im Bereich des Beckenkammes ... am linken Oberschenkel ... mehrere Haematome im Vulvaberich”*).

Amnesty International is urging the Austrian authorities to investigate the alleged ill-treatment of Sabine Geisberger thoroughly, speedily and impartially, to bring to justice anyone found guilty of ill-treating her, and to compensate her for the injuries inflicted upon her.