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United Kingdom: Extradition warrant for Róisín McAliskey should be reviewed

As today marks one year since Róisín McAliskey was first detained, Amnesty International is appealing to the UK authorities to urgently review the warrant for her extradition to Germany.

“Róisín McAliskey was detained without charge, pending an extradition order, for six months in conditions which amounted to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment -- which led to a serious deterioration of her health,” Amnesty International said today. “Given the apparent lack of substantial evidence against her, we are concerned about the grounds on which Róisín McAliskey is held and could be extradited.”

Róisín McAliskey was arrested in Northern Ireland on 20 November 1996 and within a week was brought to England to face a warrant for her extradition to Germany. Although pregnant at the time of arrest, she was subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment during her detention in Castlereagh Holding Centre in Northern Ireland, in the all-male Belmarsh Prison in London, and in Holloway Prison in London.

“Róisín McAliskey is in a *Catch 22* situation: she has been caught up in a legal situation that cannot be resolved given her ill-health at the same time that her health cannot improve until the legal situation is resolved,” Amnesty International said. “The legal limbo she is in at the moment is placing additional strains on her health.”

“If Róisín McAliskey were to be extradited in her present medical condition, we would be concerned that this would constitute further cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”

Throughout the last year, Róisín McAliskey has not been requested to submit evidence in support of her statement that she was not in Germany during the relevant time, between 14 and 28 June 1996. Indeed, Amnesty International has been informed that there is documented evidence recording her presence in Northern Ireland during that time.

Background of case

Róisín McAliskey was detained in London on the grounds of an extradition warrant by the German authorities which was issued on suspicion of her involvement in an IRA bomb attack on a British Army barracks in Germany in June 1996. Since the birth of her daughter in May 1997, she has been released on bail on condition that she reside in a mother and baby unit in a hospital; medical reports have indicated that she is suffering from severe post-traumatic stress. She has been too ill to attend any of the court hearings in relation to the extradition warrant.

According to the extradition procedures, a *prima facie* case against the person sought does not have to be presented. Thus in this case, the prosecution authorities have provided very limited indications of the evidence against Róisín McAliskey. The evidence against her,

disclosed in court proceedings, consists of a statement by a German man and fingerprint evidence.

The authorities stated that the German man identified Róisín McAliskey from police photos as someone called "Beth" who was in Germany along with other people at the relevant time before the attack. A German television program, however, interviewed the German man who stated that from the pictures shown to him he could not recognize Róisín McAliskey as "Beth".

Three other witnesses, who also saw this person named "Beth", have not identified Róisín McAliskey from photos shown to them. In addition, there is reported evidence of Róisín McAliskey's fingerprints on a piece of cellophane found near the rented holiday home.

The German authorities have not provided detailed evidence which would establish *prima facie* that she was involved in the bombing attack; nor has the evidence supporting her claim that she was not in Germany before and during the attack been sought by the authorities. It would appear that she would have to be extradited to Germany and remain in prolonged detention before that evidence could be heard; however, her ill-health prevents her from following that course.
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For further information, please refer to Amnesty International report: *United Kingdom: Cruel inhuman or degrading treatment: Detention of Róisín McAliskey*, AI Index: EUR 45/08/97, dated April 1997.