

monthly newsletter from amnesty international

postcards for prisoners campaign

January 1968

Here is some news about previous prisoners:

Angel Martinez, Spain (October 1967 Newsletter). Angel Martinez was released as promised in December 1967 and has now been reunited with his family. I am sure that your cards were a source of hope to him while he was in prison.

Lim Kean Siew, Malaysia (December 1967 Newsletter). Members will be delighted to hear that Mr. Lim was released on December 24th 1967 within a few weeks of his arrest. He has written to several members to thank them for their concern.

Mirza Afzal Beg and Sheikh Abdullah, India, Kashmir (April 1966, July 1965 Newsletter). Both have now been freed from all restrictions.

Alexander Ginsburg, Yury Galanskov, Alexei Dobrovolsky and Vera Lashkova, U.S.S.R. (August 1967 Newsletter). Their trial began on January 8th at Moscow City Court. Officially the trial is reported to be open to the public, but only close relatives and other selected people have been allowed in to the courtroom so far. According to Soviet sources the accused are being tried for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and currency offences; the prosecution has asked for seven years imprisonment for Galanskov, five years for Ginsburg, two years for Dobrovolsky and one year for Miss Lashkova. An Amnesty lawyer, Mr. Ingjald Sørheim, from Norway, managed to go to Moscow on January 10th, but has been refused entry to the courtroom so far.

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, S. Africa (June 1965 Newsletter). In January this year Sobukwe's wife and children were allowed to visit him on Robben Island and stay with him for a fortnight.

Ilias Iliou, Greece (May 1967 Newsletter). Please renew your appeals to the Greek Embassy in your country and to the Minister for Public Order (Mr. Panayiotis Tsevelekos) on behalf of Mr. Iliou. He is still in detention, held in Averoff prison hospital with severe diabetes. His sugar count is known to be dangerously high. Mr. Iliou is sixty five.

Here are this month's prisoners:

František Kučera S.J., Czechoslovakia.

Father František Kučera is a Jesuit priest from Bohemia, whose name first appeared on a list of Prisoners of Conscience smuggled out of the country by an ex-prisoner in 1966. Some time later it was discovered that he had been in prison since 1960, serving a 16 year prison sentence passed on him after a secret trial in the town of Ostrava. The charge was high treason according to paragraph 78, section 1 of the Czechoslovak Criminal Code valid at that time.

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It is reported from unofficial sources that Father Kučera and those sentenced with him in 1960 were specifically accused of trying to re-establish the Jesuit order in Czechoslovakia, seeking contacts with their superiors and with members of their order abroad and both of having religious books and encyclical letters of the Pope Pius XII in their possession and lending them to other people. Father Kučera received the highest sentence, possibly because he was a senior member of his order. He is reported to be imprisoned in a former monastery where most of the other imprisoned priests are held and to be in poor health; it is believed that this is due to hard labour imposed on him during a previous prison sentence.

Amnesty International has ample evidence of persistent persecution of the Roman Catholic Church by the Czechoslovak government, whose official dogma is atheism. This persecution was much more severe in the Stalinist years, when large numbers of priests were imprisoned or deprived of the right to practise as priests for long periods. Nowadays the situation is considerably improved but, 20-25 Roman Catholic priests and lay people are still in prison for their religious beliefs.

Send your cards to either: or:

Mr. Alexander Dubček,
First Secretary of the Central
Committee of the Communist
Party of Czechoslovakia,
PRAHA- Mala Strana, Nabrezi kpt.
Jarose 4,
Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Alois Neumann,
Minister of Justice,
PRAHA - Nove Mesto,
Vyšehradská 16,
Czechoslovakia.

Letters to Father František Kučera, S.J., to be sent to: Věznice Kartouzy,
Valdice okres Jičín, Czechoslovakia.

Madame Vasso Katraki, Greece.

Mrs. Katraki has an international reputation as an engraver and sculptor. She is aged fifty three and has been held in detention without charge or trial since 21st April 1967. She is thought to be considered "politically unreliable" by the Junta because she has exhibited in Communist countries as well as in Western Europe and America and as a result of this has friends and contacts behind the Iron Curtain. Mrs. Katraki suffers from high blood pressure and stomach ulcers and was transferred from Yaros to a prison hospital in Athens in the autumn of 1967 but recently she has been taken back to the detention camp on Yaros although her health has not improved.

Mrs. Katraki is known to be a firm supporter not only of human rights in Greece but of political and individual freedom in other countries. She was one of those who protested against the sentences passed on the two Russian writers Siniavsky and Daniel.

Please stress in your letters, that when Greece became a member of the Council of Europe she guaranteed certain basic freedoms and that arbitrary detention without trial of this nature is a breach of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Send your cards to either:

The Greek Embassy in your
own country.

or:

Mr. Panayiotis Tsevelekos,
Minister for Public Order,
Athens, Greece.

Sheikh Majibur Rahmar, Pakistan.

Majibur Rahman is the President of the Awami League in East Pakistan. This party stands for greater autonomy for East Pakistan. In April 1967 he was arrested after demanding a plebiscite to determine popular opinion on his proposals. He was held under the Defence of Pakistan Rules, emergency legislation which was introduced to protect national security during the fighting with India in 1965. After a year in prison without trial he was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment on a charge of 'making a prejudicial speech'. This sentence is not due to expire until July 1968.

Although Sheikh Amjibur is only about forty years old his health is said to have been affected by the bad conditions in prison. Confirmation has not been possible, as the Pakistani authorities have ignored letters about the case.

Send your cards to either:

Field-Marshal Ayub Khan,
President of Pakistan,
Government Buildings,
Rawalpindi,
West Pakistan.

or:

The Pakistan High Commission or
Embassy in your own country.

Letters for Sheikh Majibur Rahman should be addressed to him at Dacca Central Prison, Dacca, East Pakistan.

Memo

In the beginning people were very conscientious about sending in replies, but perhaps understandably are not doing so regularly now. It is very important that we should be able to keep a check on the ways in which Embassies in different countries react to appeals and to note any differences in governments reactions to appeals from one country as opposed to another. Please try and remember to send in any replies (or copies) that you receive.

ERATA

Due to a typing error not picked up in the proof reading Lim Kean Siew was described as having been arrested in March 1967 not in November 1967.