

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 53/67/90  
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 19 October 1990

FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEDICAL LETTER-WRITING ACTION  
(See AFR 53/06/90 - 16 January 1990)

**Evelina DE BRUIN**  
**SOUTH AFRICA**

Evelina de Bruin, a 55-year-old mother of ten who is under sentence of death, has been transferred from Pretoria Central Prison to Upington Prison, where it will be easier for friends and family to visit her. Amnesty International was concerned at her psychological state as she was held alone in death row and the organization had urged that she be permitted more visitors to help break her isolation, one of the factors contributing to her depression.

BACKGROUND

Evelina de Bruin is one of the so-called "Upington 14" who were convicted of the 1985 murder of a policeman on the basis of "common purpose" with those who actually carried out the killing. Of 26 people initially convicted, 14 were sentenced to death in May 1989. Evelina de Bruin's husband was also one of those convicted and sentenced to death.

The killing took place in the context of a meeting called on 13 November 1985 in Upington to protest at rent rises. Police broke up the meeting by firing tear gas, following which a crowd of about 300 people stoned the house of a municipal police officer. The police officer was chased from his house and an hour later killed by two blows inflicted with the butt of his weapon. His body was then set alight.

In October 1989 Evelina de Bruin's application for bail was turned down in spite of evidence submitted by her lawyers of her psychological deterioration. She was reported to be suffering from serious psychological symptoms including insomnia, poor appetite and depression. Particularly stressful for her was her separation from her two youngest children, who were not permitted to visit her due to their young age. The possibilities of visits from other members of the family were limited since Upington is some 1000 kilometres from Pretoria, where she was held.

The decision to transfer Evelina de Bruin to Upington Prison on compassionate grounds apparently followed representations made to the Ministry of Justice by South African Democratic Party MP Dave Dalling. The remaining 13 defendants sentenced to death in this case are still on death row in Pretoria

Maximum Security Prison pending appeal. Their appeal has been postponed until early 1991.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and continues to urge clemency for those convicted in the Upington 14 trial.