

VIOLATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY



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04510 - MEXICO, D.F.
MEXICO

Nº 1

JULY, 1982.

CRITICAL CONFINEMENT CONDITIONS OF URUGUAYAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AT THE PENAL DE LIBERTAD AND PUNTA DE RIELES

The political prisoners' situation has aggravated acutely at the military prisons of Libertad and Punta de Rieles. In the last few days this situation has caused the death of three prisoners.

At the women detention establishment of Punta de Rieles, the political prisoners there confined are subject to persistent harassment by the military authorities who follow the specialized advice of regime psychologists and psychiatrists. Strident night sirens and flashing lights keep prisoners from sleeping. Constant and arbitrary individual and group punishments are applied—a recurrent type being a 45 day confinement in small and empty isolation cells, during which period all regular cell breaks and family prison visits are cancelled.

The women prisoners are only allowed a twice a day bathroom break. This seriously affects women who are ill. It has been over a year since all windows were shut closed with dark screens so that neither fresh air nor daylight enters the prisoners' quarters. Following a United Nations Human Rights Committee prison visit in February, the military authorities took retaliations on the prisoners. All personal belongings were confiscated (books, handcrafts, family letters and photographs) and the food brought by the relatives was deliberately spoiled.

The health and life of the prisoners are jeopardized by the bad sanitary condition. Malnutrition and vitamins deficiency (product of an insufficient diet), together with absence of ventilation, lead to skin lesions, pyorrhea, peripheral neuropathies, upper respiratory infections, lice proliferation, etc.

Particular concern deserves the health condition of:

- *Selva Braselli*, 43 years old. In prison since 1975. She has a severe ischemic cardiopathy, hypertension and repeated sepsis of unknown etiology.
- *Mónica Etorena Lavalle*, 30 years old. In prison since 1972. She has systemic lupus erythematosus.
- *Graciela Jorge*, 36 years old. In prison since 1973. She has a spine lesion, of unknown origin, treated with radiation therapy as a tumor.
- *Rita Ibarburu*, 62 years old. Confined since 1975. She has a cardiopathy, hypertension and peripheral neuropathy. After being punished in October 1981, presents hemiplegia probably due to a stroke.

To obtain sanitary protection for the sick prisoners is of top priority, since deliberate negligence has led to the death of several political prisoners at the Penal de Punta de Rieles. Among them: Gladys Yañez Rijo, Ana María González, and Myriam de Soares Netto.

Similar conditions prevail at the Penal de Libertad, the men military prison. On the 25th and 31st of December last, all the political prisoners were threatened with death by guards not under alcoholic intoxication. The food rations for prisoners has been reduced systematically. Their total ration consists of a morning and night cup of boiled barley water with a small

piece of bread; the mid day meal is either 20 grams of ground meat or a dish of noodles and another piece of bread. Prisoners must survive on food sent by their relatives and, even this, is strictly restricted. Once a month, prisoners may receive from them not more than one packet of yerba mate, sugar, tea or coffee; 3/4 kilo of powdered milk, a jar of mermelade and two kilos of crackers. No vegetables, fruit or meat are allowed in.

Punishments are frequent. Without known reason, all cell breaks are suppressed. Furthermore, all physical exercise is forbidden. If any prisoner tries as much as a gymnastic move, he is immediately punished. There is no longer authorization to read books nor make handcrafts.

Deliberate neglect in medical attention add on to these measures which affect the prisoners' physical and mental health. Ill people are especially affected. There is great concern for the life of:

- *Héctor Rodríguez*, 63 years old. He is hypertensive. He had a left retina central vein thrombosis and consequently his left eye vision is very diminished. He had two gastrointestinal bleedings in the last months.
- *Raúl Cariboni Da Silva*, 51 years old. He has mitral valve stenosis of long date. His bad health condition determined a medical consultation in 1976 and the required laboratory tests were not performed until 1978. The results confirmed the necessity of cardiac surgery to correct the valve defect. The surgery has not yet been practiced.
- *Rosario Pietrarroia Zabala*, 68 years old. He had one eye removed and suffers glaucoma of the other one. If he does not receive an adequate treatment, he will become blind.
- *Daymán Osvaldo Cabrera Sureda*, 30 years old. He is in prison since 1972. He has a chronic bronchopulmonary disease secondary to a chronic asthma. As a consequence of it, he suffers right heart failure—cor pulmonale—and emphysema. He had had more than twelve pneumothorax. He needs ventilatory assistance to compensate a severe respiratory insufficiency.
- *Héctor Quartiani*, 34 years old. A partial surgical removal of an intervertebral disc was practiced to him. At present he has a severe paresis of lower limbs with marked muscular atrophy.
- *Evar Luis Lacuesta*, 28 years old. Confined since 1977. He has severe juvenile onset diabetes. He suffered several hypoglycemic crisis due to the prison conditions (diet, non sterile injections material, psychological stress) and inadequate treatment.
- There are several prisoners of different age groups, with diverse types of cancer. Among them: *Arturo Alcibiades Barboza Campos* (testicle cancer), *Crispín García* (lung cancer), *Uruguay Ruffinelli* (skin cancer), *José Barboza* and *Germán Molina* (larynx cancer). A special note on this critical issue will be published in a subsequent bulletin.

Under these critical confinement conditions, the political prisoner Rubén Sosa died last May at the Military Hospital. The coffin was delivered sealed to his family under strict prohibition to be opened. At the time of his death, Rubén Sosa was still detained at the Penal de Libertad in spite of the fact that he had served his term as of January.

The death of another political prisoner, Enrique Viera, occurred at the end of May under circumstances which create great concern over their possible recurrence. At the Penal de Libertad there are approximately 12 prisoners with critical mental disturbance and who share regular prison life with the rest. Obviously this entails a great danger for all the prisoners concerned. The mental illness of these prisoners has been utilized by the prison authorities as a way of punishment and harassment against some of the prisoners by placing them in the same cell with one of the mentally disturbed. As a way of avoiding this dangerous coexistence, many thus pointed out have deliberately infringed the regulations so as to be transferred to the isolation punishment cell. Juan Francisco González Valdez is one of these political prisoners who became mentally disturbed after torture. A medical diagnosis of regressive schizophrenia is recorded in his prison file.

The fatal event in which Viera lost his life occurred when the latter and González Valdez were ordered to chop wood. Despite his medical diagnosis, the axe was given to González Valdez. According to the official version, in a moment of distraction of the guard, González Valdez stroke Viera with the axe killing him immediately. The political prisoner Viera was close to the end of his prison term.

Juan Alfredo Pino Garín had completed his 10 year sentence but he was nevertheless retained at the Penal de Libertad. His relatives requested his liberation and the military authorities responded that he had been transferred to a rural military unit. Notification of his death was given to the family upon delivery of the corpse in June.

CONCERN FOR THE LIFE OF JOSE LUIS MASSERA

The health condition of Eng. José Luis Massera, prominent scientist and Uruguayan political opposition leader, has deteriorated over the last few months. Massera has been sentenced to 20 years and is confined at the Uruguayan military prison for political prisoners, the Penal de Libertad.

Massera was arrested on October 1975 and was subject to tortures which caused a hip injury. Lack of medical attention resulted in his currently having one leg a few centimeters shorter than the other.

He has lately been subject to permanent persecution by the military establishment authorities. For several weeks his personal belongings have been persistently confiscated; the philosophical and scientific works he was writing in prison were destroyed; no books have been allowed in to him and he was forced to deteriorate, himself, the supply of food he had. For the past months he has been under special punishment, for which reason, the daily cell breaks have been forbidden. Finally, he has been denied receipt of the necessary medicine

for the treatment of an acute and critical hypertension which may bring about fatal consequences.

The situation of this eminent mathematician has caused the concern of the international scientific community. Since his detention, he has been awarded a Doctor Honoris Causa degree by the Universities of Rome, Nice, Berlin and Quito. 3400 mathematicians from 33 nations claimed for his freedom before the Uruguayan military government. Numerous academic institutions, like the Science Academy of the United States and of France have petitioned that Eng. Massera be permitted to leave the country to resume his research work. Over 200 institutions have offered him a position.

The deterioration of his health condition moved the Mexican Mathematicians Committee to petition, before the Uruguayan Ambassador in Mexico, authorization to visit Eng. Massera in prison; they expressed their fear for the life of this prominent scientist. There are several precedents of decease among the political prisoners at the Penal de Libertad due to lack of medical attention. This has been the recent case of Gerardo Cuesta, latter Secretary of the National Laborers Convention (CNT).

It is our belief that all the facts listed in this bulletin are part of a deliberate and well conceived plan to assassinate, in the course of time, all political prisoners. This is why we turn to your organization, seeking your active support and commitment for the protection of the lives of the Uruguayan political prisoners.

THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT DOES NOT TOLERATE OPPONENT PRESS

On May 14, the Government decreed the close-down, for eight months, of the monthly magazine *La Plaza*. In its last issue it had published a homily of the catholic priest Luis Pérez Aguirre, making public the disappearance of regime political opposers and what he called "State Kidnappings".

The close-down of other weekly publications aims at silencing other discrepancies with the government. *La Democracia* was closed-down on January 21, for eight issues, due to its publishing an article about a banned political leader. On July 1, and a four days after Director Dr. A. Zumarán interviewed the American Senator Edward Kennedy, the weekly *La Democracia* was again brought to close for 24 issues.

Opinar was closed-down on March, for eight issues, for defending banned political leaders and freedom of expression for the press. *Opción* was closed-down on April 27 for eight issues; this Christian Democrat publication was accused of making propaganda in favor of the dissolved Socialist Party.

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