

# VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY



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## LIBERTAD PENITENTIARY: THE SITUATION WORSENS FOR PRISONERS

The situation of political prisoners at the Libertad penitentiary continues to aggravate. New and dangerous elements have added to those mentioned in Bulletin No. 1 (scarce and insufficient food, verbal and physical harassment, among others).

Penitentiary authorities have reduced to 50 per cent the monthly food package prisoners were allowed to receive from their relatives to complete the prison ration. It is important to underline that there are certain prisoners who, for different reasons, do not receive these food packages or who receive much-reduced ones.

Irrational limitations apply to winter clothing as well, although temperature drops to almost zero degrees centigrade from July to September in Uruguay. Prison authorities have arbitrarily made up timetables for the use of woolen caps, scarves and gloves while drinking hot water has been restricted to one litre per prisoner daily.

These regulations are enforced under severe penalties for anyone not observing them, ill prisoners included. José Luis Massera (see Bulletins 1 and 2), for example, was refused an electric heater in his cell although it had been prescribed by doctors.

No physical exercises are allowed for prisoners.

Regarding medical attention, the authorities allow prisoners to consult doctors or apply for medicines at 8 a.m. Any inmate in need of medical attention after this hour must wait until the following day.

All this, far from being the result of carelessness by the authorities, is part of a deliberate and criminal plan aimed at the physical health of the prisoners.

## ILLEGAL CONFINEMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO HAVE SERVED THEIR TERMS

In the last few years, the Uruguayan government through different means has prevented political prisoners from being released after having served their terms.

The procedure for this has been mainly through security measures in force and the re-prosecution of prisoners.

Security measures are a type of state of siege the country is permanently under. It empowers the Executive to keep citizens under arrest for any length of time.

The 1966 Constitution originally stated the enforcement of security measures must be watched over by the Legislative branch. Because there is no Congress since 1973, the Executive finds itself free to have citizens arrested without any guarantee for the latter.

The Constitution states anyone arrested under security measures may choose to leave the country. The government, violating once again the Constitution, denies people this right.

Re-prosecution of prisoners consists of extending their terms when these are about to be served. New charges are

made against such prisoners by mere presumption or by making them accept these charges by means of physical harassment.

Both such methods have been widely condemned by human rights organizations and are considered to violate legal procedures contained in conventions protecting individual rights of which Uruguay is a signatory country. Thus, such cases are tantamount to state-kidnappings.

Such procedures have been used against a great number of political prisoners since the dictatorship took power in Uruguay. The following list of those affected by these procedures is not complete (in brackets, the dates terms were served – whenever this information was available – and whether the prisoners have been re-prosecuted): Héctor Alaniz (April, 1981); Carlos Alcoba (July, 1981); Juan Almiratti Nieto (March, 1982); Néstor Arbono (July, 1981); Luis Ardisono (May, 1981); Jesús Batto (August, 1981); Luis Bernier (June, 1981); Rudemar Carbajal (May, 1981); Rogelio Cardozo (August, 1981); Oder Cardozo (June, 1981); Mirta Cubas (January, 1982); Moreira Echechury (December, 1980); Julio Etcheverry (December, 1980); José Frustáco (December, 1980); Alfredo Gómez (January, 1982); Carlos E. Guimaraes (November, 1981); W.D. Guinovart (June, 1981); Irma Leites (November, 1981); José Alberto López Mercado (April, 1981); Augusto Kennedy (1981, re-prosecuted); Américo Méndez (August, 1981); Oscar Olivera (August, 1981); Rubén Paiva (1981, re-prosecuted); Orlando Pereyra (August 1981, re-prosecuted); Milton Ramírez (November, 1981, re-prosecuted); Carmen Rinaldi (October, 1981); Jorge Selves (July, 1981; transferred in June, 1982 to the same place where Rubén Sosa was murdered in May. See Bulletins 1 and 2); Demetrio Staurinaquis (January, 1981).

## LABOUR UNION AND POLITICAL LEADER DENIED FREEDOM

*Washington Rodríguez Beletti*, 50, served his sentence term in March 1982 and is to date retained prisoner. Having been arrested in March 1972 he was confined, after brutal torture, in the Libertad Penitentiary where, in the last few months, he has been subject of especially harsh treatment despite his poor health condition.

Rodríguez Beletti suffers from chronic bronchopulmonary disease, result of chronic asthma, enlarged heart right ventricle, heart insufficiency and advanced tuberculosis. He recurrently requires ventilatory assistance to survive.

In 1964, R. Beletti began organization of the Sugar Workers Labour Union (UTAA) in the northern province of Artigas, alongside Raúl Sendic. At the time, these rural workers were not protected by any of the benefits of the Uruguayan social and labour legislation; to the contrary, the most bare exploitation and less than subsistence living conditions prevailed in the area. Six years of hard organization and political work in which R. Beletti shared hardships with sugar workers and clandestine conditions with their leaders,

and three UIAA marches on Montevideo over the decade (650 kms. on foot) claiming expropriation of large unproductive estates, culminated in a victorious 1970 UTAA-led sugar workers general strike. Rodríguez Beletti was also member of the 26th of March Movement Central Committee, organization integrating the Frente Amplio political coalition.

There is reasonable fear for the life of this labour union and political leader in view of recent assassination of prisoners either having completed or about to complete sentence term; in all cases official reports indicated "suicide" or "natural death". (In addition to the cases reviewed in our Bulletin No. 1, mention must be made, among others, to the death of Hugo Dermit Barbato and Horacio Ramos occurred in the past year under similar pattern.) This is why we ask all organizations concerned with human rights to urgently promote international campaigns requesting, from the Uruguayan government, the immediate liberation of Rodríguez Beletti. All efforts must be made to *prevent* both a tragic outcome as well as application of the re-prosecution or state security power measures policies which, by prolonging confinement, may well end in an incurable health situation leading to death.

## MORE YOUNG OPPOSITIONISTS PERSECUTED AND MISSING

In our last issue we informed on the following young government oppositionists having been jailed, tortured and missing: *Antonia Yañez, Ivonne Klinger, Raúl Clericó, Hugo Machin, Adela Baz* and *Cristina Garrido*. Of this group, only Adela Baz, missing since September 1981, has been reported imprisoned at the Punta de Rieles Penitentiary.

The following names have been added to the list:

*Ricardo Giuria*, missing for several months.

*Ana María Varela*, History professor, who was kidnapped by regime forces outside her home on September 20, 1981, is presumably held at the 9th Cavalry Regiment in Montevideo. Her detention has not been admitted yet by the military authorities who have told her mother Ana María supposedly travelled to Buenos Aires.

*Fernando Seoane, Sergio Pandolfo* and *Omar Paita*, missing; their whereabouts unknown.

*Fernando Borsani* and his wife, *Yolanda Esponda de Borsani* missing.

## WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR PROPER MEDICAL ATTENTION AND THE PROMPT RELEASE OF SELVA BRASELLI AND JOSE LUIS MASSERA

*Selva Braselli*, 44, was elected in 1971 Montevideo city councillor for the Frente Amplio coalition. She has been imprisoned since 1975, being presently held at the Punta de Rieles penitentiary.

While in prison she developed hypertension —with high diastolic pressure— which has not responded to treatment, followed later by an early arteriosclerosis. This has caused a coronary failure and Angina pectoris which could cause a fatal myocardial infarction if her present living conditions are not improved and if permanent and adequate medical care is not provided.

Moreover, she suffers from a spinal illness and chronic ear suppuration with deafness, produced by an untreated otitis she caught in prison. Besides, a viral ocular infection (herpetic keratitis) she suffers since childhood has aggravated while in prison, resulting in a partial cornea opacity with vision diminished. She also suffers from an old pancreatic failure causing her a digestive disorder.

Because of her serious general condition, she has been admitted in the military hospital on several occasions. Her

physical appearance shows an early senility making her look at least 60.

She is constantly subjected to tension and harassment like the other women imprisoned in Punta de Rieles, while her husband —Uruguay Ruffinelli imprisoned since 1975— has undergone a skin cancer operation and is presently confined in the military hospital.

The couple's two daughters —Gabriela, 11 and Silvia, 10— were under the custody of their paternal grandmother who died recently. Both girls were put under the custody of their father's sister, a juvenile diabetic and insulin dependent for the last 25 years, who also suffers from severe neurosis.

Selva Braselli was sentenced to 10 years and is now about to be released.

Amnesty International has made a worldwide call this year for doctors and medical unions to address letters to the Uruguayan authorities asking for Braselli to be properly treated and released.

*José Luis Massera*, on whom we informed in our Bulletins 1 and 2, suffered a fifth hypertension attack on August 16. He was taken to prison infirmary where a diuretic (Lasix) was administered. The prisoner was not taken to the hospital nor were necessary analyses made. The authorities rejected two formal requests that Massera be submitted to a medical council.

We call on all union organizations devoted to the defense of human rights to join the humanitarian campaign for the release of Selva Braselli and José Luis Massera, addressing letters to:

Supremo Tribunal Militar  
Dr. Federico Silva Ledesma  
8 de octubre 2958.  
Montevideo, Uruguay.

## THE POLITICAL PARTIES STATUTE: A FALSE MEASURE OF DEMOCRATIC OPENING

On June 3, 1982, the State Council (organism which replaces the dissolved Parliament and whose members are both elected and suspended in duties by the government) approved the so called Political Parties Statute, drawn up by an Armed Forces committee without any consultation with the currently tolerated political parties.

This decree politically bans the Frente Amplio as well as all the parties and groups which form part of this political coalition: the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the 26 of March Movement, the Communist Party, the Unified Action Groups (GAU), the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR) and others.

In the last elections held in Uruguay in 1971, the Frente Amplio had obtained 300,000 votes which represents 20% of the electorate.

The decree maintains proscription over the main political leaders of all the parties; they cannot be elected to any party office nor popular election governmental office. Furthermore, according to Art. 51, sentence C of the Statute, anyone who mentions or refers to persons who have their citizenship or political rights suspended, or have an arrest warrant issued by the military court, is liable of imprisonment. This means that these latter citizens not only may not participate in political campaigns but also may not be referred to publicly.

Intimidating procedures against tolerated political parties the last few weeks, added to the facts already mentioned, prove the real meaning of the so-called "political opening".

Former Senator and Representative of the province of Soriano, Luis Bernardo Pozzolo, was repeatedly summoned and questioned by the police after delivering speeches at meetings held by the Colorado party of which he is a leader. Máximo Gurmendez, another Colorado leader was taken to court because of his political activities.

The editors of the National party weekly, *La Democracia*, Roberto Rubio and Alberto Zumarán are being tried for their journalistic activities.