

## **AUNG SAN SUU KYI MYANMAR (BURMA)**

Daw<sup>1</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi is perhaps one of the most well-known women political activists in the world today. For her courageous non-violent opposition to the repressive military regime governing her country and her defence of human rights, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1991. As a result of the supposed threat which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses to state security, she has been held under house arrest by the Myanmar authorities since July 1989.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - the daughter of Aung San, revered as the father of Burmese independence - returned to Burma in 1988 to look after her dying mother, and soon became involved in the democracy movement. In September 1988 she helped to form the National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD is the largest legally-recognised political party in Myanmar. It won more than 80% of the seats in the May 1990 elections. However, it is the military authorities, who staged a coup in September 1988, who still hold power, and not the NLD. Before and during the military coup, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were killed by security forces. Martial Law introduced shortly after the coup included laws banning "political gatherings".

Beginning in June 1989 the NLD and other opposition parties organized peaceful rallies in defiance of Martial Law. The NLD also held memorials for students killed by the military and rallies at which Aung San Suu Kyi called for non-violent resistance to Martial Law. Aung San Suu Kyi once described her party's campaign as "no more violent than is necessary in banging the keys of a typewriter". But their activities throughout June and early July 1989 were met by the military authorities with a wave of arrests.

On 19 July 1989 Aung San Suu Kyi and other party leaders called off a Martyrs' Day March planned for that day. There were reports of lines of troops blocking the route. Truck loads of more troops were said to be standing by. Aung San Suu Kyi was worried and called off the march because of "the very big troop presence and because we have heard that some hospitals have made preparation to receive extra patients".

When Aung San Suu Kyi returned to her home she found 11 truck loads of troops outside her house. They remained there all night and all the next day. On 21 July 1989 a military government spokesperson confirmed that both NLD Chairman General Tin U and Aung San Suu Kyi were under house arrest.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, considered a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International since her arrest in July 1989, is detained under the administrative detention provisions of the 1975 State Protection Law, which concerns supposed threats to state security. She has now been held under house arrest for over three years. In August 1991 the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) amended the 1975 State Protection Law to extend the time people can be detained without trial from three years to five years. As Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is held under the administrative detention provisions of this law, this means that she can now be detained for five years without trial.

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<sup>1</sup>Daw: an honorific title for a woman, denoting respect.

Until recently she has been detained at her home in Yangon (Rangoon) in complete isolation from her family and the outside world. Since April this year she has been allowed two visits from her husband and two sons - the first in over two years. She has been allowed no contact with other people. During 1991 she had reportedly been under constant pressure from the authorities to leave the country as a condition for her freedom. She had reportedly agreed to this, provided four conditions were met: 1. All political prisoners are released; 2. power is transferred from the military to the elected civilian government; 3. she is allowed 50 minutes' air time on Burmese television and radio; and 4. she is allowed to walk to the airport.

Despite the announcement by the SLORC in April 1992 that they will release all political prisoners who are not deemed a threat to national security, there is no indication that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will also be released. Over 1200 prisoners have so far been released, but thousands may remain in prison.

General Saw Maung - the former chairman of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council - has said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would never lead Burma because she is married to a foreigner, Dr Michael Aris, a fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford.

In addition to the Nobel Peace Prize, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had previously been awarded the Rafto Human Rights Prize in Norway (November 1990) and the European Parliament's human rights award, the Sakharov Prize (January 1991). More recently, in June 1992 she was awarded UNESCO's Simon Bolivar Prize for human rights campaigning, shared with former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the well-being of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Recent information received by the organization indicates that she continues to be held in almost complete isolation and that her health may seriously deteriorate. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has consistently refused to accept food and other necessities from the authorities, and Amnesty International understands her own resources are now running out. She has been refused access to the doctor of her choice, in contravention of international standards.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Write directly to the Myanmar authorities. Explain to them your interest in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Express concern about her health and the fact that she has now been held without charge or trial for over three years. Urge that she be granted free access to a doctor of her choice. Appeal for her immediate and unconditional release.

Appeals can also be sent to the Foreign Minister in your own country asking him/her to raise the case of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with the Myanmar authorities. You could also ask your Foreign Minister to raise this case with governments belonging to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), requesting that they use their influence to try to secure the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

## **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

A photograph of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is available.

## **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

1. General Than Shwe  
Chairman  
State Law and Order Restoration Council  
c/o Ministry of Defence  
Signal Pagoda Road  
Yangon  
Union of Myanmar

### **Salutation: Dear General**

2. Major General Khin Nyunt  
Secretary 1  
State Law and Order Restoration Council  
c/o Ministry of Defence  
Signal Pagoda Road  
Yangon  
Union of Myanmar

### **Salutation: Dear Major General**

Please send copies of appeals to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar accredited to your country.

## **VERA CHIRWAMALAWI**

Vera Chirwa, aged 60, is the longest-serving prisoner of conscience in Africa. She has been in jail since 1981 because she thinks Malawi should be governed differently. Her husband, Orton Chirwa, was imprisoned for the same crime; he died in custody at the age of 73 on 20 October 1992 in Zomba Central Prison, where Vera Chirwa is still held. Vera Chirwa was not allowed to attend his funeral in his home area of Nkhata Bay on 1 November 1992. Their son, Fumbani Chirwa, was also arrested with her but was freed two years later and fled into exile. Their other children are also refugees abroad.

In 1983 both Vera and Orton Chirwa were sentenced to death for treason. They had been tried before a "traditional court" which had refused them a defence lawyer or the right to call witnesses, and ignored many other international norms for a fair trial. They were convicted and sentenced to death. A "traditional appeal court" acknowledged that their trial was "wrong in law", but for unstated reasons upheld the sentences it had imposed. After an international outcry about the extreme unfairness of their trial, the Life-President of Malawi, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, commuted their sentences to life imprisonment in June 1984.

Vera Chirwa, like her husband, had trained as a lawyer in Britain in the 1950s. They both played a leading role in the campaign for the independence of Nyasaland (re-named Malawi at independence) from the United Kingdom in 1964. Orton Chirwa was a founder and the first President of the Malawi Congress Party, which has ruled Malawi since independence. When Dr Banda returned home in 1960 after years of political exile in the United Kingdom, Orton Chirwa stood down for him. Orton Chirwa continued, however, to play a leading role in the party and after the 1961 elections he held many political positions. By the time of independence in 1964, he was a leading cabinet minister in the government.

Within weeks of independence there was a major dispute about domestic and foreign policy which resulted in the resignation or dismissal of six leading cabinet ministers, including Orton Chirwa. All six went into exile abroad. Vera and Orton Chirwa, and their son Fumbani, went to Tanzania where they lived for 17 years.

During this period, Vera Chirwa was a visiting lecturer in law at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. She was also a leader of the Malawi Freedom Movement, a new political party formed in exile by Orton Chirwa. Life-President Banda has regularly issued threats against Malawian politicians in exile.

In January 1982 *Malawi Radio* announced that Vera and Orton Chirwa, and their son, Fumbani, had been arrested on 24 December 1981. Accounts of their arrest differ. The authorities say they entered the country in secret in order to overthrow the government. It seems, however, that they were forcibly abducted from a Zambian border area by Malawi security officials and taken into Malawi.

In September 1992 a delegation of British lawyers was allowed to visit the Chirwas - the first visit they had received for many years and the first time in eight years that Orton and Vera Chirwa had seen each other. Vera Chirwa recounted details of their violent arrest in Zambia and subsequent ill-treatment and poor health. She suffers from cataracts in both eyes and high blood pressure, both caused by solitary confinement in harsh conditions and denial of medical treatment for years. Twice, for three months at a time, she was chained to the ground by arms and legs. She is held alone in a tiny cell on "death row", without even a chair in it.

Vera Chirwa was unfairly tried, is in jail for the expression of non-violent political beliefs, and should be set free immediately.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Write to the Life-President of Malawi, Dr Banda, and the two ministers listed below. Tell them what you have read about the case of Vera Chirwa. Tell them that her trial was grossly unfair. Mention her current state of ill-health, as reported to the British lawyers in September 1992, and her urgent need of proper medical treatment and humane prison conditions. Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Vera Chirwa. Send copies of your appeals to the Commissioner of Prisons and to diplomatic representatives of Malawi accredited to your country.

- Write to your own local and nationally elected officials. Ask that they show their commitment to the democratic process by writing their own letters and ensuring that your national government is aware of Vera Chirwa's detention and is actively pursuing her release.

### **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

- Malawi will hold a referendum on **15 March 1993** to decide whether to retain the one-party system or not. Please try to get some appeals to the President before that date.

- A more detailed account of this case can be found in AFR 36/03/89 which was issued to mark the 70th birthday of Orton Chirwa in 1989.

- Vera Chirwa was one of AI's 30th Anniversary Appeal Cases (AI Index: ACT 30/02/91)

- The delegation of British lawyers which visited the Chirwas in September 1992 produced a report, Human Rights in Malawi, which features statements made to the delegation by Vera and Orton Chirwa. The report was published by the Law Society in December 1992 and can be obtained from: The Law Society, 50 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1SX, United Kingdom.

- The photograph of Vera Chirwa shown in the text is available to sections. Unfortunately we do not have a recent photograph of Vera Chirwa, who is now aged 60.

### **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

**Send most of your appeals to Life-President Banda, but ensure that the two ministers listed below receive some appeals.**

1. President

His Excellency the Life-President Dr H Kamuzu Banda  
Office of the President and Cabinet  
Private Bag 301  
Lilongwe 3  
Malawi

**Telex: 44389 PRES MI or 44113 EXTERNAL MI**  
**(Faxes: +265 731878 - FAX NOT ALWAYS OPERATIVE AT PRESENT)**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2. Minister of State in the Office of the President:

Hon. John Tembo  
Minister of State  
Office of the President

Private Bag 301  
Lilongwe 3  
Malawi

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

3. Minister of Justice:

Hon. Friday Makuta  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Private Bag 333  
Lilongwe 3  
Malawi

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO**

Commissioner of Prisons  
Malawi Prison Service Headquarters  
Private Bag 28  
Zomba  
Malawi

and to diplomatic representatives of MALAWI accredited to your country.

## **LEYLA ZANATURKEY**

Leyla Zana is a Kurdish independent Member of Parliament for Diyarbakır and a member of the People's Labour Party (HEP). She has been threatened with death, both in writing and orally, because of her political activities and also because of her involvement in investigations into human rights violations against Turkey's Kurdish minority. She is also one of a group of Kurdish parliamentarians whose immunity the Ankara Chief Prosecutor is seeking to have lifted so that they can be tried on charges of separatism which carry the death penalty.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A state of emergency is in force in 10 provinces in southeast Turkey where the security forces are engaged in counter-insurgency operations against Kurdish separatist guerillas. More than 100 people have been killed in the Kurdish provinces during 1992 in circumstances which have provoked allegations of extrajudicial execution. The main targets have been local politicians - in particular members of HEP, which is seen as representing the Kurdish minority; local representatives of the Human Rights Association (IHD); journalists investigating human rights abuses; and villagers who refuse to participate in the system of government-appointed village guards.

### CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Leyla Zana, who is married with two children, was one of 17 Members of Parliament named in a leaflet threatening death to 28 people, which was distributed in various towns in the predominantly Kurdish southeast in April 1992. She was specifically mentioned as follows:

"Muslims, we swear in the name of Allah that the whore Leyla Zana (followed by the other 27 names) will be slaughtered in the name of Allah."

The leaflet was signed with the words "Islami Cihad-B (Islami Yumruk)", which means "Islamic Holy War-B (Fist of Islam)", an organization previously unknown in Turkey. Although the threats purport to come from such an organization, they have been widely attributed to the Turkish security forces.

Fears for her safety have been heightened by the fact that at least seven journalists and local correspondents working for the group of newspapers also specifically threatened in the leaflet were killed in 1992.

Also in April 1992 a British human rights delegation reported that Leyla Zana received an oral threat at Tepe, near Bismil, from the Diyarbakir Gendarmerie Commander. The delegation, the Diyarbakir Police Chief, and another Kurdish Member of Parliament, were present when the threat was made. The Diyarbakir Gendarmerie Commander reportedly told Leyla Zana:

"You are my enemy. I will only be satisfied when I have spilt your blood. Even if I killed you and drank your blood, I still would not be content. I am going to kill you, but first I am going to discredit you."

In view of the continuing series of mysterious killings in the southeast, often after the abduction and torture of the victim, Amnesty International remains deeply concerned for Leyla Zana's safety.

Leyla Zana is also one of a group of 22 Kurdish parliamentarians who may possibly be prosecuted on charges which carry the death penalty. They have been accused under Article 125 of the Penal Code which states:

"Any person ..... who carries out any action intended to destroy the unity of the Turkish state shall be punished by death."

The Ankara Chief Prosecutor has prepared a case which apparently deals mainly with statements made by Leyla Zana and another parliamentarian at their inauguration and with speeches and statements made by them and the other 20 parliamentarians during the election campaign in 1991.

An application to lift their parliamentary immunity so that the prosecution can proceed has been approved by the parliamentary Mixed Commission of Constitution and Justice and will eventually be voted on by the full Turkish Grand National Assembly (parliament).

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Please write to the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior of Turkey, whose addresses are given below. Express your concern at the death threats received by Leyla Zana and the possibility that she may be brought to trial on charges which carry the death penalty.

You could also include some or all of the following points:

- More than 100 people have been killed in the Kurdish provinces during 1992 in circumstances which have led to allegations of extrajudicial execution;
- No serious investigations appear to have been carried out into these killings;
- Ask what steps are being taken to prevent any further killings of this nature.

The most important element in this case is publicity - in newspapers, magazines, radio or television in your own country, or in Turkey if this is possible. Listed below are four Turkish newspapers to which letters and copies of press cuttings can be sent. The Turkish Daily News is an English language newspaper, the other three are in Turkish.

National women's organizations are also very important in this case, please contact any in your country and enlist their support in publicizing Leyla Zana's situation.

Also contact your local Member of Parliament, or the equivalent in your country, and ask him/her to write to the Turkish authorities expressing concern that a democratically elected representative of the people should be subjected to threats of this kind.

### **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

Further background information on the situation in Turkey can be obtained from Turkey: Walls of Glass, AI Index: EUR 44/75/92, issued November 1992.

Please send copies of press cuttings to the diplomatic representative of Turkey in your country, provided the articles are factual and not aggressive in tone.

A photograph of Leyla Zana is available (it is a different photograph to the one used in this text, as this is not of suitable quality for enlarging, should sections wish to do this).

### **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

**Prime Minister**

Mr Süleyman Demirel  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Başbakanlık  
06573 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 4 417 0476  
+ 90 4 230 8896

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**Minister of the Interior**

Mr Ismet Sezgin  
İçişleri Bakanlıđı  
06644 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 4 418 1795

**Salutation: Dear MinisterNEWSPAPERS:**

1.  
Cumhuriyet  
Türkocađı Cad. 39  
Cađalođlu-Istanbul, Turkey

2.  
Milliyet  
Nuruosmaniye Cad. 65  
Cađalođlu-Istanbul, Turkey

3.

Hürriyet

Babiali Cad. 15/17

Cağaloğlu-Istanbul, Turkey

4.

Turkish Daily News

Tunus Cad. 50-A/7

06680 Kavaklıdere-Ankara, Turkey

**BLANCA CECILIA VALERO DE DURÁN COLOMBIA**

Blanca Cecilia Valero de Durán, a married woman with three children, was the secretary of the Comité Regional de Derechos Humanos (CREDHOS) (Human Rights Regional Committee) based in Barrancabermeja in the Magdalena Medio region in Central Colombia. The committee for several years has been denouncing human rights violations committed by the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary groups in the Magdalena Medio region and offering support to the victims and their relatives. She was killed in circumstances suggesting she may have been extrajudicially executed.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The area of the Magdalena Medio in central Colombia has been a focus of political violence for several years following the emergence of guerrilla groups in the 1960s and subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. In areas where guerrilla forces are active the local population is often perceived by the armed forces, and paramilitary groups working with them, as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

Human rights organizations working for the defence and promotion of fundamental human rights in Colombia face severe and increasing difficulties. People working to guarantee recognition and respect for human rights have faced harassment and threats and, increasingly, extrajudicial execution.

The work of CREDHOS in defence of human rights in the area of Magdalena Medio has achieved international recognition. In 1991 the committee received the 'Lettelier-Moffit' award from the Institute of Political Studies in Washington D.C., USA. Amongst other activities the committee publicly denounces human rights abuses committed by the regular armed forces or paramilitary groups operating under their command or with their support, and also those committed by guerrilla organizations in the region. However human rights groups attempting to support victims and denounce abuses have frequently been accused by high-ranking army commanders of links with subversive groups and have themselves increasingly come under attack.

#### CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Dr Jorge Gómez Lizarazo, President of CREDHOS, based in Barrancabermeja, department of Santander,

spent several months outside Colombia following serious threats against his life by paramilitary groups. He returned to Barrancabermeja at the beginning of 1992 only to have the threats and harassment recommence.

Only days after Dr Gómez Lizarazo's return, Blanca Cecilia Valero de Durán left the CREDHOS offices in Barrancabermeja at about 6.30pm on 29 January and two armed men in civilian clothes fired several shots at her at point blank range, killing her. According to reports, three policemen who witnessed the attack did not respond to her cries for help or attempt to capture the assailants, who remain at liberty. Following this attack several of the Committee's staff left Barrancabermeja due to the serious risks they faced of an attempt being made on their lives. However, the killings continued. In June 1992 CREDHOS worker Julio César Berrío was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen in an ice-cream parlour. In July 1992 Ligia Patricia Cortez, a student working on an educational project for CREDHOS, was shot dead - together with two trade unionists she was interviewing.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Write to the Colombian authorities expressing serious concern at the killing of Blanca Cecilia Valero de Durán in circumstances suggesting she may have been extrajudicially executed and asking that a formal inquiry be made into her death and that the results be made public. You should also stress that those responsible be brought to justice.

You could also include the following:

- Ask that efforts be made to identify those responsible for the threats against other members of CREDHOS;
- Ask that formal inquiries be instigated into the killings of Ligia Patricia Cortez and Julio César Berrío and that the results be made public;
- Request that measures be taken to guarantee that human rights workers are able to carry out their lawful activities without fear of reprisal.

Please send copies of your letters to the Andean Commission of Jurists (Comisión Andina Juristas, address given below), and to the diplomatic representative of Colombia accredited to your country.

Appeals can also be sent to the Foreign Minister in your own country asking him/her to raise the case of Blanca Cecilia Valero de Durán with the Colombian Government and also asking for guarantees for other human rights workers.

Publicity in your own country is an important factor - letters or articles in newspapers or magazines, even a mention on radio or television if this is possible. You may also send letters and press cuttings, and copies of your appeals to the government authorities, to the Colombian newspaper Vanguardia Liberal, listed below (letters to the newspaper should preferably be written in Spanish).

## **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

A photograph is available.

## **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

### **President**

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia  
Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066  
+ 57 1 286 7324  
+ 57 1 287 7937

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Señor  
Presidente  
Dear President Gaviria**

### **Procurator General**

Dr Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla  
Procurador General de la Nación  
Procuraduría General  
Edificio Banco Ganadero  
Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

**Salutation: Señor Procurador  
General de la Nación  
Dear Dr. Arrieta**

**Minister of Defence**

Dr Rafael Pardo Rueda  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

**Salutation: Señor Ministro**  
**Dear Minister**  
**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO**

Comisión Andina Juristas  
AA 58533  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Vanguardia Liberal  
Calle 13, No 13  
Bucaramanga  
Department Santander  
Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

## **MARIA ELENA CRUZ VARELA CUBA**

María Elena Cruz Varela is a leading Cuban political dissident. As a member of a small, unofficial opposition group, the Cuban Government has accused her and other dissidents of writing "offensive, slanderous pamphlets" which call for public demonstrations and question the authority of the National Assembly. For this reason she has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and has been in custody since November 1991.

María Elena Cruz Varela is the President of **Criterio Alternativo**, Alternative View, which is a part of the **Concertación Democrática Cubana**, Cuban Democratic Convergence. Cuban Democratic Convergence is one of a number of small, unofficial groupings of varying tendencies, some overtly advocating general political change and others concerned more specifically with respect for religious, trade union or general human rights, which have emerged in Cuba over the past three or four years. None has received official recognition from the Cuban authorities.

For a brief period in 1988/89, the activities of such groups appeared to be generally tolerated by the authorities. However, from the second half of 1989 onwards, the government attitude hardened and the level of harassment and arrests began to increase. The activities of such groups have so far been largely peaceful and most have consistently expressed their opposition to the use of violence to bring about their aims. Despite this, since mid-1991 the authorities have taken increasingly strong measures to counter any signs of dissent and many members of dissident organizations have been arrested or otherwise harassed for carrying out peaceful legitimate activities related to freedom of expression, association and assembly as guaranteed under international law. In particular, the leaders of several of the most prominent groups have been arrested and imprisoned on charges ranging from illegal association, defamation and "enemy propaganda" to rebellion and revealing state security secrets.

María Elena Cruz Varela, who is also a prize-winning poet, was arrested in November 1991 after she and other leading dissidents had met with the President of the Government of Asturias in Spain during his official visit to Havana. She was detained after a campaign of harassment took place at her home between 19 and 21 November 1991 in the course of which several individuals reportedly entered the house and physically attacked her, trying to force her to swallow documents found there. She was brought to trial on 28 November 1991 at a municipal court, together with three other activists. She was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on charges of illegal association and defamation. She began serving her sentence in Combinado del Sur Prison, Matanzas, and was transferred to Carlos J. Finlay Military Hospital in April or May 1992 for treatment for gynaecological problems. For a certain period while being held there, she was reportedly subjected to long hours of questioning by state security officials. She is still believed to be held there at present.

Amnesty International considers María Elena Cruz Varela to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for acting in accordance with her conscientiously-held beliefs and calls for her immediate and unconditional release.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Write directly to the Cuban authorities. Explain to them your interest in María Elena Cruz Varela. Call for her immediate and unconditional release. Impress upon them that

they should not imprison people for their non-violent political activities. Ask that they respect human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Write to your own local and nationally elected officials. Ask that they show their commitment to the protection of human rights by writing their own letters and ensuring that your national government is aware of María Elena Cruz Varela's detention and is actively pursuing her release.

If there are diplomatic representatives of Cuba in your country, send them a copy of your letter to the Cuban authorities, or send a separate appeal, making the same points.

### **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

A research paper, [Cuba: Silencing the Voices of Dissent](#) (AI Index: AMR 25/26/92), was published by the International Secretariat in December 1992.

The paper contains information on the case of María Elena Cruz Varela and other Cuban prisoners of conscience, as well as a full background to Amnesty International's current concerns in Cuba.

A photograph of María Elena Cruz Varela is available.

## **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

1.) President:

Su Excelencia Dr Fidel Castro Ruz **Su Excelencia/**  
Presidente del Consejo de Estado **Your Excellency**  
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

2.) Attorney General: **Señor Fiscal General/**

Dr Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa **Dear Attorney General** Fiscal General de la República  
Fiscalía General de la República  
San Rafael 3, Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

3.) Minister of Justice:

Dr Carlos Amat Forés **Señor Ministro/**  
Ministro de Justicia **Dear Minister**  
Ministerio de Justicia  
Calle O. No. 216, 8vo piso  
e/ 23 y Humboldt, Vedado  
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Please send copies of your appeals to the Cuban authorities to diplomatic representatives of Cuba accredited to your country.

## **NOUR AL-HOUDA AL-BAHRITUNISIA**

Nour al-Houda al-Bahri has been imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience and tortured for her political beliefs as a member of an illegal communist opposition political party in Tunisia. She was sentenced to four months' imprisonment in November 1992 but released in a Presidential amnesty on 12 January 1993. Her allegations of torture in police detention have not been investigated.

### **BACKGROUND**

Increasingly repressive measures have been taken over the last year and a half against activists of an illegal political organization, the Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party. A number of women members of the party have been arrested, kept in prolonged incommunicado detention and tortured. Other women who are members or wives of activists have been harassed by having their houses raided or being questioned by the police.

The arrest and torture of PCOT activist women occurs at a time when there is also repression and harassment of Islamist women whose husbands are members or supporters of the banned Islamist movement al-Nahda (Renaissance). Thousands of members of al-Nahda have been arrested and sentenced to long prison terms over the last two years, and wives of many activists in prison, in exile or in hiding are regularly called in for questioning about their husbands' whereabouts and their activities. During detention for questioning, which can last for a few hours or a few days at a time, the women are often ill-treated or tortured. This includes beatings, sexual abuse by forcing the women to undress in front of male police officers and threats of rape made to them and to other members of their family - even if they are not politically active. Pressure is put on them to stop wearing the hijab (Islamic veil) and to divorce their husbands.

**Nour al-Houda al-Bahri**, a 30 year-old hospital worker in Gabes, was approximately five months pregnant when she was arrested from home with her husband on 5 November 1992. Members of the security forces searched their house at 3am, without showing either an arrest or a search warrant. While in incommunicado detention Nour al-Houda al-Bahri was reportedly undressed, beaten, and threatened with rape if she did not talk about her activities within the illegal Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens, PCOT, Tunisian workers' communist party. She was allegedly tied by the hands and feet and suspended on a bar in the poulet rôti (chicken on a spit) position, and beaten on the soles of her feet.

As Nour al-Houda al-Bahri's physical condition worsened and she appeared to be in danger of miscarrying, she was released the following day. She went to hospital where she received treatment for two days. She also consulted other specialists and tried to lodge a formal complaint about the treatment received whilst in police custody, but she was rearrested and detained until 18 November, when she was tried with three other people arrested at the same time and accused of political activities for the same movement (PCOT). Amongst these was also another woman, six months pregnant, who was also beaten and ill-treated.

The defence lawyers complained about torture allegations by Nour al-Houda al-Bahri and the other detainees, but the court refused to grant a medical examination or to order an investigation into the allegations. Other complaints by the lawyers concerning breaches of procedures such as falsification of arrest dates and illegally prolonged garde à vue detention were also ignored by the court, and the two women were sentenced to four months' imprisonment on charges of belonging to an unauthorized organization (PCOT) and collecting money without permission. Despite the fact that bail was granted to the two pregnant women pending appeal, they remained detained as prisoners of conscience until the appeal took place on 11 January 1993. Their sentences were upheld, but they were released the following day as a result of a Presidential pardon.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Write to the Tunisian authorities. Explain to them your interest in Nour al-Houda al-Bahri. Emphasize the

importance and necessity of investigating her allegations of torture. Emphasize your concern at numerous reports of ill-treatment and torture of women in Tunisian police stations and ask the Tunisian Government to ensure that all these reports are fully investigated and those responsible brought to justice. Urge that the Tunisian Government set up an independent body or ombudsman to inspect police stations and ensure no detainee suffers torture, ill-treatment or sexual harassment.

- If there are diplomatic representatives of Tunisia in your country, send them copies of your letters to the Tunisian authorities, or send separate appeals, making the same points.

### **NOTES FOR SECTIONS**

Unfortunately a photograph of Nour al-Houda al-Bahri is not available.

## **ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS**

1. Président M. Zine El Abidine  
Ben Ali  
Président de la République  
Palais Présidentiel  
Tunis/Carthage  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 744721**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2. M. Abdallah Kallel  
Ministre de l'Intérieur  
Ministère de l'Intérieur  
Av Habib Bourguiba  
Tunis  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 340888**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

3. M. Sadok Chaâbane  
Ministre de la Justice  
Ministère de la Justice  
Boulevard Bab Benat  
Tunis  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 568106 or 567070**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

4. M. Habib Ben Yahia  
Ministre des Affaires Etrangères  
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères  
Place du Gouvernement  
La Kasbah  
Tunis  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 791005**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

5. M. Rachid Driss  
Président  
Comité supérieur des droits de l'homme  
et des libertés fondamentales  
44 rue de Pologne  
Tunis  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 270646 or 796593**  
**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

6. M. Iadh Ouederni  
Conseiller particulier à la Présidence chargé des droits de l'homme  
Palais présidentiel  
Tunis/Carthage  
Tunisie  
**Fax: 216 1 731009**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Please send copies of appeals, or separate appeals, to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country.