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@Women in the Front Line:

Appeals Cases 1992

Front cover picture: Bedi workers from the Punjab demonstrating in Raj Pat Delhi, November 1981, c. Format Photographers

MARIA NICOLAIDOU

GREECE

Maria Nicolaidou was among 33 young men and women detained in Athens, Greece on 2 November 1991 after policemen found them sticking up political posters in connection with events during demonstrations the previous month against government policy on education.

The detainees were taken to the headquarters of the Geniki Asfaleia (General Security) on Alexandras Avenue where it is alleged that all 12 of the women were ordered to strip naked and were kept in an open room in full view of a number of policemen who made obscene gestures and comments. They allege they were ill-treated between 3pm on 2 November and 1.30am on 3 November. Fifteen of the detainees, including four women, Maria Nicolaidou, aged 23, Katerina Maliou, aged 22, Roubini

Theotokatou, aged 20 and Dina Kalakou, aged 24, lodged a formal complaint against the police on 4 November. They also sued for a nominal sum of 1,000 drachmas in damages.

Maria Nicolaidou stated: "Although I am three months' pregnant and informed the police of this immediately, they did not hesitate to hit me on my head on the 12th floor of the General Security. More specifically, a senior plainclothes police officer, who was sitting in an office, came out of his office, grabbed me by my hair and beat my head against the wall violently, abusing me with foul language such as: *'You are a whore, tramp'*."

Newspaper reports described her as "extensively bruised" when she appeared in court on 5 November. The complaint lodged by the detainees stated that all the female prisoners were ordered to get completely undressed so the police could carry out body searches. These were allegedly carried out under conditions which the women stated were "offensive, crude, irregular and humiliating".

The 33 detainees were charged with illegal posting of bills; resisting authority; damaging private property; upsetting security communications; abuse and disseminating false information. On 5 November they all started a hunger-strike in protest against their continued detention by the security police. Their trial started on 4 November. On 13 November they were released from detention after being sentenced by a court in Athens to six months' imprisonment for illegal posting of bills and

verbal abuse. They remain free pending appeal. In April the Greek authorities informed Amnesty International that "these allegations after investigation were proved to be not true". No information about the methods and findings of the investigation was given. At the end of June 1992 their complaint about ill-treatment by the police was still in the hands of the examining magistrate.

Maria Nicolaidou has since given birth to a healthy baby and both mother and baby are well.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write to the Greek authorities:

- expressing concern about the allegations of ill-treatment made by 15 of the 33 people detained in Athens on 2 November 1991;
- stating that you understand the examining magistrate is conducting an investigation into these allegations. Urge that the investigation is prompt, thorough and impartial, that the findings are made public and that anyone found responsible be brought to justice. Request to be informed of the methods and findings of all investigations;
- expressing particular concern that Maria Nicolaidou allegedly continued to be beaten even though she had informed the police that she was pregnant.

Addresses for appeals:

Theodoros Anagnostopoulos
Minister of Public Order
Ministry of Public Order
1 Katehaki Street
101 77 Athens
Greece

Michalis Papakonstandinou
Minister of Justice
96 Messogion Avenue
115 27 Athens
Greece

Virginia Tsouderos
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
1 Akadimias
106 71 Athens
Greece

Increase the power of your letter by sending copies to the Greek Embassy in your country.

MARÍA RUMALDA CAMEY**GUATEMALA**

At 05.00 am on 15 August 1989, heavily armed men in plain clothes, believed to be members of the security forces, burst into the home of María Rumalda Camey, aged 23, in Escuintla department and abducted her in front of her husband and two children, one aged six months and still breast feeding, the other aged two. She was forced into a waiting car and taken away. She has not been seen since and, despite a habeas corpus petition submitted on her behalf, she remains "disappeared". She is a member of the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo por el Aparecimiento con Vida de Nuestros Familiares (GAM), Mutual Support Group for the Appearance of our Relatives Alive, formed in 1984 by families of "disappeared" people attempting to determine the fate of their missing relatives.

María Rumalda Camey joined the GAM after the "disappearance" of her brother-in-law. María Camey's "disappearance" is the sixth in a succession of kidnappings and extrajudicial executions carried out since March 1985 against members of the extended Chitay/Camey families, originally from the predominantly Kachikel Indian community of Semetabaj, San Martín Jilotepeque municipality, Chimaltenango department. The families, many of whom were catechists (lay-preachers), were targeted by the armed forces because of their involvement with religious groups considered "subversive" by the armed forces, and were forced to flee the region in 1982, during the height of the counter-insurgency campaigns there.

Since that time the family have continued to be singled out as targets by the security forces. During 1989, three further members of this extended family were kidnapped and subsequently found dead in circumstances suggesting armed forces involvement. Other family members, many of them GAM members, have also been followed and threatened by men in plain clothes, believed to be members of the armed forces. Twenty-five family members threatened have left the country in fear of their safety and now live in exile abroad. There is concern for the safety of those relatives remaining in Guatemala.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the government to initiate investigations into abuses carried out against this family, but has received no reply and to date, knows of no investigations begun into the fate of those "disappeared" and those extrajudicially executed.

Tens of thousands of people have been victims of human rights violations in Guatemala over the past two decades. Trade unionists, academics and students, priests and catechists have been abducted, tortured and killed. Indian villagers have been seized, mutilated and shot dead. Thousands of men and women detained by the military and police have been "disappeared" - their families and friends cannot find out what has happened to them.

Since the "disappearance" of María Rumalda Camey, GAM has campaigned vigorously for her reappearance alive. On 29 May 1990, members of the organization peacefully occupied the offices of

the International Red Cross, to call attention to the plight of the 40,000 "disappeared" in Guatemala, highlighting particularly three recent "disappearances", among them María Rumalda Camey, and asking that they reappear alive. However, according to a later statement from GAM, following a meeting held on 5 June 1990 with Vice-President Roberto Carpio Nicolle, the Vice-President informed GAM that the government could not do anything on the case of María Camey.

María Rumalda Camey "disappeared" under the government of President Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo who took office in 1986, and was the country's first elected civilian president in almost twenty years. Regrettably, his administration did little to investigate abuses committed under previous military governments or to bring those responsible to justice. After a brief initial decrease, reports of torture, "disappearances", and political killings escalated throughout his administration.

President Jorge Serrano Elías took office in January 1991. During his presidential campaign he had pledged to ensure protection of human rights. However, Amnesty International remains seriously concerned at continuing human rights violations in Guatemala, including extrajudicial executions, death threats, torture and "disappearances". Despite repeated appeals from Amnesty International to the former and present governments, as well as to official human rights bodies, the whereabouts of María Rumalda Camey remain unknown.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please send appeals to the Guatemalan authorities calling for:

- a full and independent investigation into the "disappearance" of María Rumalda Camey;
- those found responsible for the abduction of María Rumalda Camey to be brought to justice;
- guarantees for the continued security of the extended Chitay/Camey family in Guatemala.

Addresses for Appeals:

President of the Republic

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Minister of Interior

Lic. Fernando Hurtado Prem
 Ministro de Gobernación
 Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
 Palacio Nacional,
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Minister of Defence

Gral. José García Samayoa
 Ministro de Defensa
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Palacio Nacional
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Increase the power of your letter by sending copies to the Guatemalan embassy or consulate in your country.

VERA CHIRWA**MALAWI**

Vera Chirwa has been in jail since 1981 because of her beliefs. She thinks Malawi should be governed differently. Her husband, Orton Chirwa, is imprisoned for the same reason. For the first two years of their imprisonment their son, Fumbani, was also jailed without charge or trial.

Vera and Orton Chirwa were originally sentenced to death for the crime of treason. After an international outcry about the unfairness of their trial, the Life President of Malawi, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, commuted these sentences to life imprisonment. However, on at least one occasion he has said that he was too lenient on the Chirwas and has suggested that they should be executed. They are now serving their 11th year in prison. In May 1991 it became known that Orton Chirwa was being held in leg irons as a punishment. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners expressly forbids the use of chains or irons as either a restraint or as a punishment.

Vera Chirwa, like her husband, had trained as a lawyer in the United Kingdom in the 1950s. They both played a leading role in the campaign for Malawi's independence 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 to Malawi in 1960 after years of political exile, 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 from Britain 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 went to Tanzania with their son, Fumbani and other children.

They lived there for 17 years. While there, Vera Chirwa was a visiting lecturer in law at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. Orton Chirwa formed a new political party, the Malawi Freedom

Movement, in exile. 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. The Chirwas say they were visiting sick relatives in eastern Zambia when they were forcibly abducted by Malawi security officials and taken into Malawi.

In May 1983 Vera and Orton Chirwa finally came to trial. They were convicted of treason. They were tried before a traditional court. An appeal court later agreed that their first trial was, among other things "wrong in law". However, for unstated reasons, the appeal court upheld the death sentence on both Vera and Orton Chirwa. They were unfairly tried, are in jail for the expression of non-violent political beliefs and should be set free immediately.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please send appeals to the Life President of Malawi, Dr. Banda calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Vera and Orton Chirwa.

Address for appeals:

H.E. The Life President
 Ngwazi Dr H Kamuzu BANDA
 Life President of the Republic
 of Malawi
 Office of the President and Cabinet
 Private Bag 388
 Lilongwe 3
 Malawi

Increase the power of your appeals by copying them to diplomatic representatives of Malawi in your country.

MUELMININ MENT BOUBA OULD BREIKA**MOROCCO**

Muelimnin ment Bouba ould Breika was arrested by Moroccan security forces in Laayoune in 1976, and has since "disappeared." She was taken away from her two small children who have not seen her since. Her family have not been able to obtain any information on her whereabouts. Past experience has shown that people who have "disappeared" in Morocco may still be alive and held in secret detention; hundreds of prisoners have recently been released after having "disappeared" for many years. Sixteen years after her arrest the fate of Muelimnin ment Bouba ould Breika continues to be unknown.

Since Morocco took control of the Western Sahara in 1975, hundreds of Western Saharan civilians have "disappeared" after being arrested by the security forces. "Disappearances" of people, usually because they or their relatives were known or suspected supporters of the Polisario Front (Frente Popular para la Liberracion de saguia el-Hamra Y Rio de Oro), continued at least until 1987. Those who "disappeared" were held in desert

camps or forts, or in secret detention centres in towns, cut off from the outside world. Conditions for detainees held at one camp, Qal'at M'gouna, were appalling during the first ten years. Detainees were told that they would be held until they died, and 43 out of over 200 held there between 1975 and 1991 did die there.

The Moroccan Government repeatedly denied over many years that there were any people from the Western Sahara secretly detained. Then, in June 1991, over 260 Western Saharans were suddenly released, some after more than 15 years in secret detention. The Moroccan authorities confirmed these releases, despite previously denying the detentions. However, the "disappeared" who were released in June 1991 have remained under strict surveillance by the Moroccan authorities, preventing them from making contact with the outside world. Many of them are in poor physical condition as a result of their long detention.

Those who were released had been held at the hill fort of Qal'at M'gouna, 40 km northwest of Ouarzazate, and from a secret centre in the town of Laayoune in the Western Sahara. There are reported to be many other secret centres, some in remote mountain areas. In spite of these releases, hundreds of other Western Saharans remain "disappeared." Among those who remain "disappeared" is Muelimnin Bouba Breika.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please send appeals to the Moroccan authorities listed below calling for:

- clarification of the fate of Muelimnin ment Boubaould Breika and all others who have "disappeared"
- the immediate and unconditional release of Muelimnin ment Boubaould Breika and any other "disappeared" people who may still be held in secret detention;
- the closure of all remaining secret detention centres and an end to the practice of holding people in unacknowledged detention in contravention of international law.

Addresses for appeals:

Sa Majesté King Hassan II
Bureau de Sa Majesté le Roi
Palais Royal
Rabat
Morocco

Minister of Interior:

Driss Basri
Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Information
Quartier Administratif
Rabat
Morocco

Increase the power of your appeals by copying them to the Moroccan diplomatic representatives in your country.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI**MYANMAR**

"Facing the truth can be a painful task which calls, not only for courage, but for faith - faith that in the long run sincerity and good will can overcome the lingering effects of duplicity and hatred."

The words of Aung San Suu Kyi on the challenge facing her country were delivered by her son at an awards ceremony in Washington DC on 14 May 1992. She was unable to deliver them in person because she has been detained by Myanmar's military government since 19 July 1989. She is kept at her home in the capital which is ringed with barbed wire and soldiers standing guard in sentry boxes.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Myanmar's independence hero, Aung San, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 in recognition of her non-violent struggle against a government widely condemned for its brutality. She is considered to be the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the largest legally

recognised political party in Myanmar, which swept to victory in May 1990 elections in spite of her detention. The ruling military junta has ignored the election result and refused to hand over power.

After months of nationwide demonstrations protesting 26 years of one-party military rule, the military reasserted control in a coup on 18 September 1988. 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 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. She was joined in these calls by the NLD chairperson, a retired military officer, General Tin U.

General Tin U and Aung San Suu Kyi always insisted that the gatherings they organized should be non-violent. But their activities throughout June and early July 1989 were met by the military authorities with a wave of arrests.

On 19 July 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 General Tin U and Aung San Suu Kyi were under house arrest.

Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest. She was allowed no contact with her family for two years until May 1992, when her husband and two sons were allowed to visit her. She has struggled peacefully against an oppressive military government which has often resorted to the use of violence. She should be set free and allowed to express her non-violent political views freely and to organize peaceful political assemblies.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write directly to the military authorities. Explain to them your interest in Aung San Suu Kyi and 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.

Address for appeals:

State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar

Address letters to:

General Than Shwe (Chairman SLORC)
Major General Khin Nyunt (Secretary 1, SLORC)
Brigadier General Myo Nyunt (Member, SLORC)

Increase the power of your letter by sending copies to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar in your country.

CHERRY MENDOZA**PHILIPPINES**

Cherry Mendoza and Cecilia Sanchez were arrested on 3 December 1990 by approximately 30 soldiers of the Philippines Constabulary (PC) and the Philippines Army (PA) who blocked their way as they were out walking in Binaritan, Bataan province.

After examining the women's possessions and finding cigarettes, sweets and letters, the soldiers accused Cherry Mendoza and Cecilia Sanchez of taking provisions to members of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the banned Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which has been responsible for numerous attacks on government officials and supporters. The women were forced aboard a military vehicle where they were made to lie on the floor and covered with clothing so as not to be seen.

The women were taken to the 176th PC Company headquarters in Morong. Cherry Mendoza alleges that during interrogation she was slapped in the face and her breasts and sexual organs were touched. She said the officer in charge of the interrogation threatened that she would be "horsed" (raped) later that night.

After the interrogation, Cherry Mendoza said that she was given fried rice to eat which she found very strongly seasoned. She subsequently experienced severe dizziness and lost consciousness.

The next day, 4 December, Cherry Mendoza awoke at 2am. She says that her whole body ached, including her genitals. The zipper of her trousers was undone and her underwear was stained with blood. She says that military officials were laughing at her.

While still in detention, Cherry Mendoza underwent a medical examination at the provincial hospital in Bataan on 12 December. The report of the examination detailed lacerations of the hymen and vagina indicating that serious sexual abuse had occurred.

Cecilia Sanchez also alleges that her sexual organs were touched during interrogation. She says she was told she would be tested to see whether she really was a *dalag* (a single woman). She says the military officer in charge of questioning her had wanted her to eat something, but she refused.

The two women allege that military officials tried to make them sign statements saying they were NPA couriers, but they both refused. They were released on 19 March 1991 after posting bail of 10,000 pesos.

The Provincial Director of the Philippines National Police¹ has vehemently denied that the two women were sexually abused.

In January 1991, a letter of invitation was sent by the Bataan Provincial Warden to Cherry Mendoza inviting her to appear at the Office of the Investigation Section of Bataan PNP Provincial Headquarters to shed light on her complaint of serious sexual abuse. However, Cherry Mendoza was advised by her lawyers not to respond to this invitation and she has since filed an official complaint against the alleged perpetrators.

Thousands of people have been detained for political reasons in the Philippines in the past two years. Most have been released after interrogation but hundreds are currently serving prison sentences. Many detainees have alleged that they were ill-treated or tortured in custody, either to extract confessions or obtain other information. The victims of torture have included human rights workers, villagers living in areas of suspected rebel activity and members of lawful organizations labelled as "fronts" for the CPP/NPA.

Members of armed opposition groups are also known to have been responsible for serious human rights abuses. However, Amnesty International believes the actions of armed opposition groups, however widespread and violent, can never be used to justify human rights violations by government forces or others acting with their cooperation.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please write to the Philippine authorities:

- Expressing your concern at reports of the sexual abuse of Cherry Mendoza and of Cecilia Sanchez and urging that these are made the subject of a thorough and impartial investigation, and that anyone found responsible for violating their human rights should be brought to justice;
- Asking what steps are taken by the government to protect women held in custody from rape or sexual abuse by members of the security forces;

Addresses for appeals:

President Ramos
Malacañang Palace
Manila
Philippines

General Renato de Villa
Secretary of National Defense
Camp General Emilio Aquinaldo
1110 Quezon City
Metro Manila
Philippines

Increase the power of your letter by sending copies to the Philippine Embassy in your country.

¹ The Philippines Constabulary was incorporated into the new Philippines National Police, which was established in January 1991 and formally placed under civilian control.

BISENG ANIK**TURKEY**

On 28 March 1992, 16-year-old Biseng Anik was found in Sirmak Police Headquarters, Sirmak province, with half her head blown away by a gunshot.

Biseng Anik was at the police station that day because she was among about 100, mostly young, people who had been detained by the Turkish police in the wake of widespread disturbances around the time of *Newroz*, the Kurdish New Year.

Describing the events the day after *Newroz*, Biseng Anik's mother told a visiting human rights delegation that eight uniformed members of the Turkish Special Team forces and two plainclothes police officers came to their home to detain her daughter. Her mother was told by the police that they were detaining students and taking statements from them, and that her daughter would be released soon.

But the next her mother heard was a telephone call:

"The police rang me. They said 'come and collect the body'."

When Biseng Anik's family saw her body, they found that the left side of her head was missing. Her grandfather says:

"When they took her away she was quite well. Three days later they phoned our home and called us to the police station. Her body was in pieces. Her hands were torn between the fingers. Cigarettes had been extinguished on her body. Her body was burned all over."

The Governor of the Sirmak province is reported to have issued a statement saying that on the day of her detention Biseng Anik had been put in a cell where a rifle had been left under the bed by a police officer, and that she had used the rifle to commit suicide. The state prosecutor's verdict of suicide caused by a self-inflicted shot to the head with a long-barrelled weapon was announced in April 1992. However, the full autopsy report has still not been released.

Biseng Anik's grandfather says that when he saw the body, he thought that the bullet had entered from the rear of her head and exited through an eye. Only an independent and full autopsy would confirm whether Biseng Anik was tortured and whether or not she committed suicide. So far, the Turkish authorities have refused to take this measure.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Unprecedented violence erupted in the southeastern provinces on the occasion of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, which is traditionally celebrated on 21 March. At least 70 civilians and five members of the security forces were killed, hundreds were wounded during demonstrations and ensuing clashes and mass arrests were made all over the region.

Newroz celebrations had been banned until last year when they were allowed for the first time. This year the authorities feared that a "spring offensive" by the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) might start a popular uprising and had sent massive troop reinforcements to the region where the PKK has gained wide popular support.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write to the authorities in Turkey. Say in your letter that you have read Amnesty International's concerns about the death of Biseng Anik.

- Urge the authorities to make the autopsy report available to her family.
- Also urge that a second, independent, autopsy be carried out without delay.
- Ask for a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the circumstances surrounding her death and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

Addresses for appeals:

Minister of the Interior
Mr Ismet Sezgin
İçişleri Bakanlığı
06644 Ankara
Turkey

Prime Minister
Mr Süleyman Demirel
Office of the Prime Minister
Basbakanlik
06573 Ankara
Turkey

Hikmet Çetin
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dışişleri Bakanlığı
06100 Ankara
Turkey

Increase the power of your appeal by copying letters to the Turkish Embassy or Consulate in your country.

KARLA FAYE TUCKER**USA**

Karla Faye Tucker is 32 years old. She was sentenced to death in April 1984 for her role in the murders of Jerry Lynn Dean and Deborah Thornton in June 1983. Karla Fay Tucker has spent the last eight years in a special death row building for women at the Texas Department of Corrections' Mountain View compound.

Karla Faye Tucker was scheduled to be executed by the state of Texas on 30 June 1992. On 22 June she was granted a stay of execution by the

Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. The court, in a 6-3 decision, ordered a hearing on the contention that a prosecution witness at her trial in 1984 had committed perjury. If her appeal fails, Karla Tucker would be the first woman executed in Texas since 1863. She would be only the second woman executed in the USA under current death penalty laws. The first was Velma Barfield, who was executed by the state of North Carolina in November 1984.

Among those now appealing for clemency for Karla Tucker are two prosecutors who were involved in the state's investigation of the Dean and Thornton murders in 1984, as well as two relatives of the murder victims. Other supporters reportedly include police officers, prison officers and a former US attorney who is a strong supporter of the death penalty. They say Karla Tucker should live because she has changed dramatically from the prostitute and drug addict she was in June 1983 when the admittedly gruesome murders were committed.

Karla Tucker began taking drugs at the age of eight. At ten she was addicted to heroin. At 11 she became a prostitute to pay for her drug habit. In April 1984, at the age of 24, she was convicted and received the death penalty for the murder of Jerry Lynn Dean in Houston. Her boyfriend was convicted of murdering Dean's girlfriend, Deborah Thornton, and was also sentenced to death. He remains on death row at the time of writing.

Those who know Karla Tucker speak of her remarkable transformation during her eight years on death row. She educated herself, has become deeply religious and has sought ways to give back something to society in repayment for the life she took (she does not deny her responsibility for the murders of Dean and Thompson). She was reportedly distressed that her organs could not be donated for transplants after her execution because the lethal injection will destroy them. "I had really hoped to be able to give my body to help others," she said. "That way I could give life back for the life I took." She taught herself sign language, "So I could take these two hands that used to hurt and let them help."

Karla Tucker's legal representation at her trial was poor. She was represented by court-appointed lawyers who failed to tell the jury about her intoxicated condition at the time of the crime. Her prolonged use of drugs had seriously affected her mental state and, on the night of the murders, she

was heavily under the influence of drugs. This mitigation evidence might well have persuaded the jury to sentence Karla Tucker to life imprisonment rather than death on the grounds that she could not be held wholly culpable for her actions.

Background

As of April 1992 there are 34 women under sentence of death in the USA, including three in Texas. About one third of the cases involved the murder of the offender's husband or lover; the proportion of men on death row for similar offences is much lower. Women on death row, in common with men in the same situation, have backgrounds described by their attorneys as including poverty, lack of education, retardation, mental illness or drug or alcohol abuse. Like the men on death row, most have had to rely on court-appointed lawyers with limited budgets to represent them at trial.

There were 14 executions in the USA in 1991 and more than 2,500 people are under sentence of death in 34 states. There were 19 executions in the first half of 1992. Eight were carried out in Texas alone.

The death penalty is not a deterrent. There is no evidence that states or countries which impose the death penalty see any reduction in violent crime. The death penalty is not impartial, its victims come overwhelmingly from the poorest sectors of society and there is substantial evidence that it continues to be applied in a racially discriminatory manner in the USA.

While many US politicians privately accept that the death penalty does not serve justice in the USA, they support it publicly to project an image of being tough on crime.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Send appeals to the two US Presidential candidates calling on them to:

- show moral leadership by publicly opposing the death penalty;
- make a commitment that if elected they will seek to put a stop to executions in the USA and support moves to abolish the death penalty in state and federal law.
- publicly appeal for the commutation of Karla Faye Tucker's sentence

Please send appeals to:

George Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
USA

Governor Bill Clinton,
State Capitol,
Little Rock,
AR 72201, USA