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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thirty-sixth session
Agenda item 10

QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED
TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT, IN PARTICULAR:

- (a) TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING
TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT;
- (b) QUESTION OF MISSING AND DISAPPEARED PERSONS

Declaration submitted by the Women's International Democratic Federation,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category I)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

[13 February 1980]

Since its inception and pursuant to its programme, the Women's International
Democratic Federation has attached great importance to the furtherance of the
principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights.

WIDF, which is untiring in its efforts to promote the rights of women and
children and to achieve social progress and peace, is highly appreciative of the
activities undertaken by the Commission on Human Rights to put into effect the
noble aims set forth in international instruments concerned with the defence of
human rights and is doing everything in its power to bring them to the attention
of the broadest possible sectors of the female population.

WIDF endorses the principle, set forth in United Nations General Assembly
resolution 32/130, that all economic, political, social and cultural rights are
interdependent, and considers that the question of the human rights of all persons
subjected to any form of detention or imprisonment should be viewed within a
broad context of the enjoyment of human rights. The Federation has in its possession
files supported by considerable documentary evidence which prove beyond any doubt
that apartheid, racial discrimination, fascism, colonialism, foreign aggression and
occupation, war and all the other forms of violation of the sovereignty and
territorial integrity of countries against the wish of their peoples to achieve
national independence by their own endeavours are and give rise to mass and flagrant
violations of all human rights.

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On the other hand, in countries whose Governments protect the economic, social, political and cultural rights of their citizens, human rights, including those of persons subjected to imprisonment, are safeguarded in conformity with the instruments of international legislation.

At the same time we express our concern at the fact that a number of States members of the United Nations have not hitherto committed themselves to complying with the specific obligations of protecting human rights by ratifying or adopting the relevant international instruments.

The distressing testimony brought to the attention of WIDF by national organizations and parents of victims, and regularly transmitted by the Federation to the Division of Human Rights are evidence that wherever there are inhuman fascist and military dictatorships, inhumane repressive régimes and apartheid, which ride roughshod over the most elementary rights of men, women and children, the application of the principle that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", set forth in article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, faces fundamental obstacles.

WIDF has on many occasions denounced prolonged or indefinite arrest, detention without trial or without prison sentence imposed by law, systematic torture, the disappearance of detainees, murder, summary execution and other acts contrary to all legal and moral standards perpetrated in southern Africa, the occupied Arab territories, Chile and other countries, especially those of Latin America, where régimes devoid of any popular support deny men, women and children their fundamental rights.

The apartheid régime is indulging in ever greater repression against the people. Thousands of persons, including women and children, are thrown into prison and live in inhuman conditions.

The sophisticated methods of torture and the atrocities committed by the South African secret police are beyond human comprehension. Eye-witnesses have reported that the latest method has been to drop the victims, still alive, from helicopters into pits teeming with venomous snakes.

In the occupied Arab territories, Palestinian women and children, as well as other detainees, are subjected to terrible torture, and large numbers of schoolchildren between the ages of 11 and 17 are in prison there for having taken part in peaceful demonstrations against the Israeli occupation.

The Chilean authorities afford their citizens no protection against clandestine arrests or against torture or abduction. Petitions sent in by families to obtain information about their "missing" relatives and to ask for their lives to be protected elicit no response.

WIDF, which is steadfast in its efforts to safeguard the rights of women and children, draws the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to the case of numerous women who are in prison in these countries, are subjected to all kinds of persecution, and are sometimes tortured to death or disappear. Among them have been pregnant women whose fate, and that of their babies who must have been born after they went to prison, is unknown.

At this thirty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the first to be held since 1979, the year proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of the Child, whose noble aims have been supported by all those concerned with solving the problems of children, we draw attention particularly to the fate of the children in those countries who have been arrested or imprisoned or confined in concentration camps, who are subjected to the same cruel treatment as adults, and who are very often compelled to be present when torture is inflicted upon their parents.

On the basis of the foregoing, WIDF takes the liberty of proposing to the Commission on Human Rights that the question of situations revealing flagrant and systematic violations of human rights, with special emphasis on cases involving women and children, should be submitted to the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for discussion. This would be in accordance with the ideas set forth in paragraph 1 of resolution 32/130 adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and calling for concerted action by the United Nations agencies in activities dealing essentially with human rights questions.