

WOMAN

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SURINAME SUPPORT GROUP CALLS FOR HELP IN LEONA REMY CASE (ST. LUCIA)

A call to Caribbean women to "mobilize, organize, and fight for social justice" has come from the "Provisional Leona Remy Defense Committee" of P.O. Box 9455, Paramaribo, Suriname.

The appeal reads:

"Twenty-two year old Leona Remy has been charged with drowning her two children. Crusader of July 25, implies that Leona was...unemployed, lived in a slum, had no one to take care of her children, was brutalized, terrorised, and tortured by a man. Our Caribbean society did not offer her any escape. Leona is charged with murder".

The communiqué calls on women's support by putting forward the social context of the issue:

"In this region of ours, women have to fight against social ills which depress our societies. These forces have in the past, and present driven women to do desperate things. Women end up in hospitals, some in prisons, in mental institutions, and some just die under the weight of these grave injustices. The majority however, are alive and trapped in endless ongoing madness of twisting and turning for survival".

The Committee proposes the following:

"Mobilize the broadest possible moral support for Leona Remy. Send your solidarity cards to; Leona Remy, c/o Editor Crusader, Castries, St. Lucia. Make sure that Leona Remy gets the best possible trial. Send women and professional observers to witness the trial in St. Lucia. Organize the best possible defense team to defend Leona Remy.

From an appeal letter dated
August 21, 1987 Paramaribo,
Suriname.

APPEAL FOR THE RELEASE OF MALAYSIAN ACTIVISTS

An urgent international appeal for the release of five women activists who have been detained by the Malaysian authorities has been launched by a support group based in Hong Kong.

A news release draws attention to the arrests of over 100 Malaysians under the Internal Security Act which allows for indefinite detention without trial. The release also expresses concern "about the emotional and psychological state of these women under police investigation".

Organizers of the appeal have set in motion a "feminist chain letter of protest to the Malaysian Government to seek the early release of our friends". They also suggest those concerned "can send your own form of protest letter to the Prime Minister/Minister of Home Affairs, Jalan Dato Onn, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with a copy to the staff, Centre for Extension and Continuing Education, Agricultural University, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

Reprinted here are biographic sketches of the five activists detained: Cecilia Ng, Choon Sim (Dr.), 37: Detained 14/11/87. Lecturer at Agricultural University, selangor. Active member of Women's Development Collective, a local women's group. Been involved in organising campaigns on Violence against Women, Women's rights and issues. Also national facilitator, Asian Women's Research Action Network (AWRAN); has attended and participated in many Asian conferences. Active also in Catholic students groups and social/human rights issues in Malaysia.

Lim Chin Chin 32: Detained 27/10/87. Coordinator of Research Communication Unit, Christian Federation of Malaysia. Active member of Women's Development Collective, been participating in women's activities, particularly audio-visuals work. Also active in community, social and human rights issues.

Chee Heng Leng 32: Detained 27/10/87. Lecturer at Agricultural University. Presently completing her Ph.d at Malaya University. Co-authored a book, Designer Genes on the nature vs. nurture controversy in Singapore. Coordinated Support Group for S'pore ISA detainees recently. Work closely with women activists on women's issues. Involved in human rights and social issues.

Patricia L. Irene 36: Detained 2/11/87. Full-time social worker. President of "Friends of Women". Actively involved with women workers issues in the Free Trade Zones, in community and in the plantations.

Meenakshi Raman, 39: Detained 27/10/87. Lawyer and legal advisor to Consumer's Association of Penang. One of the lawyers for suit brought against the Japanese company, Asian Rare Earth, over dumping of radioactive waste in village. Active in community and social issues.

From News Release dated 19/11/87

WOMEN FOR LIFE: ECOLOGISTS IN BRAZIL

Brazil faces some of the biggest ecological disasters on the planet. The destruction of the Amazon forest - the "lungs of the world" - increases by 100 percent every year. Industrial and chemical waste is polluting the vast Brazilian seashores and rivers, threatening the life of many species.

The Brazilian Government has taken no serious measures to stop the degradation of the eco-system, but many ecology groups have started raising public awareness of the issues.

Mulherio, a monthly feminist newspaper, recently interviewed three Brazilian women who are committed to this cause, as part of a dossier on Ecology and Environment. Cazilda Lanuza, from Sap for Ecology, says, "the ecological question is not an isolated one. It is political, social and economic. It is political because it is linked to politicians' interests, economic because the people who pollute are the big national or multinational industries, and social because it diminishes the quality of life of each of us".

Ana Maria Pinheiro, a member of the Permanent Assembly for the Protection of the Environment, adds, "in the beginning we worked with a very low profile. But the more cynical the Government is, giving free range to the predators of nature (companies and private interests), the more radical we become. Our actions now we are fast, popular and punchy, but without any violence, of course." Ecologists and feminists seem to be going in the same direction in Brazil.

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(Information from Mulherio, Brazil,
No.31 August 1987)

SOVIET NEWSPAPER CHARGES PSYCHIATRIC ABUSE

A Soviet newspaper Izvestiya has charged that citizens may be put in psychiatric hospitals against their will without medical cause, and that the law offers them no power of redress. The official paper also accused Soviet psychiatrists of arrogance, and said they feared publicity because it would "complicate their work".

In an article entitled "Defenseless" which appeared on July 11 this year, the newspaper cited the cases of two women who had been wrongfully confined. One released in May, spent four years in a psychiatric hospital after complaining to Communist Party officials about the treatment she had received for cancer. Her complaints were later upheld by the Ministry of Health.

However, at the time of her confinement, police and psychiatrists had followed the orders of a Leningrad Communist Party official, as did the procurator to whom she later appealed.

The focus of Izvestiya's attack is the civil commitment procedure under which mentally ill people may be forcibly confined to a hospital without charge if they pose a physical threat to themselves and others. According to guidelines (1971) in the Ministry of Health's official Directive, a single psychiatrist can commit someone with the help of police if necessary. Formally, a commission of three doctors must review each civil commitment within 24 hours.

The newspaper argued that the Directive is inadequate, and also widely disregarded. Many people have been committed without any indication that they were dangerous, and in many hospitals no commission of doctor's reviewed their confinements.

To increase safeguards against arbitrary confinement, Izvestiya urged replacing the Directive with a new law which would be binding on officials.

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