

## **Friends World Committee for Consultation - Quakers**

*Statement made at the Twelfth Session, UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Vienna, 13-22 May, 2003*

Thank you, Chairman, for the opportunity to make this statement on behalf of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, concerning women in prison.

*Building* on the workshop on women in criminal justice held at the 10<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress and welcoming the Report of the Meeting of Experts held in Stadtschlaining in 2003 which recognized the importance of developing mechanisms to gather information on the application of the standards and norms specifically in the area of gender equality; and

*Recalling* that the International Council of Women raised awareness of the importance of women's issues in UN standards and norms, we wish to draw the attention of the Commission to the importance of the following points:

In general, prison regimes are devised for male prisoners and tend to ignore the particular problems of women prisoners who are a small (though growing) proportion of people held in prison.

- (a) because of their smaller numbers, there tends to be a lack of rehabilitation and training programmes and health care specifically for women's needs;
- (b) a large majority of women in prison have one or more children under 16 years old for whom they are the primary carers, so that these children suffer as a result of their mother's imprisonment;
- (c) due to the small number of prisons for women, they tend to be imprisoned further from their homes and visiting arrangements are more difficult for the families of women prisoners than for men;
- (d) proportionate to the need, there are far too few resources for pregnant and nursing women prisoners; for instance, prison places in which babies can remain with their mothers.
- (e) the number of women who are imprisoned is rising, and part of the increase is due to women being held in foreign countries who have been coerced or deceived into carrying drugs.

All of these problems are exacerbated for women who are held in custody awaiting trial, often for long periods of time.

Hence, in view of these areas of particular concern regarding women in prison, we urge the Commission to bear in mind the treatment of women in prison in its consideration of the application of UN standards and norms in criminal justice.

Thank you, Chairman.

Nicholas McGeorge  
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