

Different faces of imprisonment

The Fredericton branch of Amnesty International has been taking part in A.I.'s annual Prisoner of Conscience Week, which runs from October 12-19 this year. As part of its activities, Amnesty International has distributed information on campus regarding human rights, violations around the world, and has sought student and faculty support of its work against these violations.

The theme of this year's Prisoner of Conscience Week is "Different Faces of Imprisonment," with the focus being on different methods of political repression, including abduction, house arrest, prosecution on false criminal charges, and short-term arrest. The aim is to turn the spotlight on techniques which avoid or bypass the too-familiar pattern of political trials, as well as on prisoners convicted on overtly political charges.

Amnesty International, a voluntary organization with more than a quarter of a million members and supporters in 134 countries, is organizing publicity and public events to call attention to such abuses as:

--"Disappearances". Many thousands of real or suspected critics of their governments have been snatched from homes and streets. Many are later found murdered. In Argentina, where an estimated 15,000 people have disappeared since 1975, escapees have described a network of secret detention camps where torture and death are commonplace. Some 25,000 people are estimated to have "disappeared" in Guatemala since 1966 and thousands in Chile. Other "Disappearances" are reported from widely separate parts of the world.

--"Banning", house arrest, internal exile. In South Africa more than 1,400 people are believed to have been "banned" by simple ministerial order since 1950. They may live year after year under strict limits as to the hours in which they can leave their houses, how many people and whom they can speak and write to, isolated and rigidly controlled. The Soviet Union and Chile are among coun-

tries where internal exile to remote areas is used; South Korea and the Central African Republic are among many whose forms of house arrest are used to stifle dissent.

--"Short-term detention". In Columbia, activists for Indian and trade union rights are repeatedly arrested for short periods and sometimes tortured before being released. Among many other countries, where repeated short-term imprisonment, often without trial, has been reported, are Pakistan and Poland.

--"False criminal charges." A Romanian economist applied to emigrate to join his wife and child abroad. He was imprisoned on charges of "homosexual acts." Prisoners of conscience in Romania and the Soviet Union are serving terms for convictions on

charges of "hooliganism," "parasitism," and other offences. In Mexico, people involved in land disputes, student and trade activities have been arrested on criminal charges that appear to be false. There are signs that this kind of repression is increasing in several countries.

Amnesty International has been organizing annual Prisoner of Conscience Weeks since 1968.

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men, women and children detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and

prompt trials for all political prisoners. Independent of any governmental political grouping, ideology, economic interest or religious creed, Amnesty International is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. The organization is a recipient of a recent Nobel Peace Prize.

Amnesty International's Fredericton branch meets on a monthly basis to work for the release of two prisoners of conscience, among other projects. Comprised largely of students and faculty of UNB and St. Thomas University, the group is always looking for new members. Anyone wishing to involve themselves in Amnesty International's work, either as a group member or as a member-at-large, should contact Dr. Alan Mason (455-3337, EXT. 66), or Robert Stranach (454-4636).

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