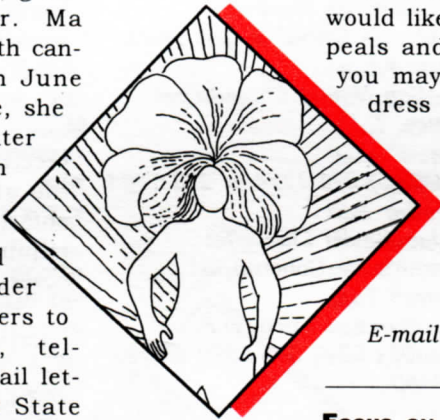


According to reports, gathered by AAASHRAN, Dr. Ma Thida was diagnosed with cancer and tuberculosis in June 1995. For a short time, she was hospitalized but later returned to her prison cell where conditions are reported to be poor.

The AAASHRAN and the Women Living Under Muslim Laws urge readers to please send telexes, telegrams, faxes or air mail letters to officials of the State Law and Order Restoration Council in Burma to express concern about Dr. Ma Thida, request information about her hospital stay in mid-June and the treatment she received, seek information regarding her current state of health, and urge her immediate and unconditional release from prison. Please address your letters to:



*General Than Shwe*  
Chairman, State Law and Order  
Restoration Council  
Yangon, Union of Myanmar

*Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt*  
Secretary 1, State Law and Order  
Restoration Council  
Yangon, Union of Myanmar

*Lieutenant General Tin U*  
Secretary 2, State Law and  
Order Restoration Council

Also, please send copies of  
your letters to:

*Vice Admiral Than Nyunt*  
Minister of Health,  
Ministers Office  
Yangon, Union of Myanmar

*Ambassador U Thang*  
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar  
2300 S Street, NW, Washington,  
DC 20008

In addition, the AAASHRAN would like copies of your appeals and any responses that you may receive. Please address them to:

*Elisa Munoz, AAAS*  
Science and Human  
Rights Program  
1333 H. St. NW  
Washington DC 20005  
Tel: (202) 326-6797  
Fax: (202) 289-4950  
E-mail: [EMUNOZ@AAAS.ORG](mailto:EMUNOZ@AAAS.ORG)  
(Internet system)

#### **FOCUS ON WOMEN IN THE MEDIA**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has initiated a major project aimed at researching and documenting issues confronting women working in the media industry in Asia. One of these issues is equal opportunity in promotion.

The project also aims to investigate and report on the portrayal of women in the media. The project, Women in the Media in Asia, focuses on five countries: Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.

The research will gauge the extent of discrimination, both direct and indirect, still being suffered by women. Information on job access, recruitment, pay, and women's promotional chances will be collated. The survey aims to elicit responses on the extent of job segregation, type of training and development, prevalence of sexual harassment and the nature of working conditions, including childcare provisions, at the workplace. Positive changes at workplaces and in women's employment conditions will be identified and credited to the organisation concerned.

The research will be conducted in journalists' workplaces. This will facilitate the prompt completion of the project and allow journalists to be

closely involved in the project. Information is being collected according to state, type of media organisation and employer.

A small group of women journalists assumed to have an understanding and interest in the issues involved in the research have been approached to form a focus group and to assist in offering an insider's perspective on the issues to be surveyed.

Source: The Alliance  
September 1995

#### **MEXICAN MILITARY USE GANG RAPE TO INTIMIDATE PROTESTERS**

Alarming reports from Mexico say that women are being gang raped by the military in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. The area is in the grips of a low intensity war being waged by Mexican military against Zapatista peasants protesting the deplorable conditions of the region. The military is using gang rape as a tool of violence and intimidation.

On 25 October 1993, Cecilia Rodriguez, Coordinator of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico was brutally raped and sodomized by three heavily armed men in Chiapas. She has also received death threats.

On 4 June 1994, three indigenous women were gang raped by 30 soldiers at an army checkpoint. Their mothers were forced to hear the screams of the women as they were raped. Charges have been brought against the soldiers but the case lies inactive at the National Defense Secretariat (SEDENA). Women are demanding that the case be turned over to a civil court so that it may be reopened and investigated.

On 4 October 1995, five



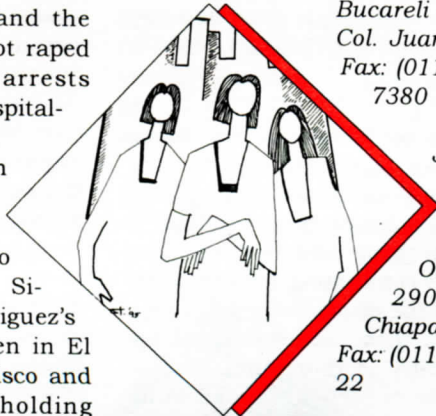
nurses who were part of a vaccination brigade were ambushed and raped by 25 heavily armed men as they were returning to San Cristobal. Rocks blocking the road forced the nurses to stop and get out of their vehicle to remove the barriers. They were ambushed by 25 heavily armed men who raped them. One woman suffered a broken pelvis and the lone woman who was not raped suffered nine cardiac arrests and continues to be hospitalized.

After the assault on her, Cecilia Rodriguez held a press conference in Mexico City to denounce the violence. Simultaneous with Rodriguez's press conference, women in El Paso, Texas, San Francisco and Chicago were also holding press conferences to denounce the violence.

But the media in Mexico and in the U.S. have not given it much coverage and even the *L.A. Times* which covered a press conference given by Rodriguez in Los Angeles decided not to print the story.

The Mexican government is not pursuing these cases actively and the media for the most part is silent on the violence that is being perpetuated against the women. The U.S. media who extensively covered Mexico's presumed economic growth prior to the economic bust is not printing the stories of the violence in Chiapas, and in particular the violence against women by the Mexican military.

Letters to Mexican officials to support the women and denounce these cases of violence against the women of Chiapas are being requested from readers. Send letters or faxes to:



C. Lic. Ernesto Zedillo  
*Presidente de Mexico*  
*Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos*  
*Puerta #1*  
*Col. San Miguel Chapultepec*  
*Mexico, D.F.*  
 Fax:  
 (011-52-5) 271-1774 or 271-1764

C. Lic. Emilio Chauyffet  
*Secretario de Gobernacion*  
*Bucareli #99*  
*Col. Juarez, Mexico, D.F.*  
 Fax: (011-52-5) 546-5350 or 546-7380

Julio Cesar Ferro  
*Gubernador Interino*  
*de Chiapas*  
*1a Avenida Norte*  
*Oriente #456*  
*29000 Tuxtla Gutierrez,*  
*Chiapas*  
 Fax: (011-52-967) 2-09-17 or 3-50-22

Ambassador  
*Embassy of the United States*  
*Paseo de la Reforma #305*  
*Col. Anzures C.P. 06550*  
 Fax: (011-52-5) 208-3373

Fax copies of your letters to 011-52-967 so the women who have been raped will know that they are not lacking in support.

[*Editor's Note: On February 1, 1996, Isis received a response from the Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Commission on Human Rights) to our letters of inquiry. The Commission reports that they have been made aware of Cecilia Rodriguez and are waiting for responses from officials investigating the rape in the state of Chiapas.*]

**HAIR-CUTTING ZEALOTS PREY ON MUSLIM GIRLS**

by Allan Nawal

COTABATO CITY - Muslim women here oppose the recent

order of religious scholars, known as *ulama*, for them to wear veils as part of the Islamic tradition.

Since December, numerous complaints have been received by the media here on the *ulama's* alleged strict enforcement of the rule requiring the wearing of head cover called *hijab*.

Suspected religious fanatics, armed with scissors, have enforced the *hijab* rule and forcibly cut the hair of unveiled Muslim women.

Shameera, a university student, had her hair fixed at a beauty parlor and was walking with friends on Don Rufino Alonzo Street here when an unidentified man approached her and stepped on her toes.

The suspect, about 30 years old, immediately pulled out a pair of scissors and cut her hair so badly that she cried.

She said the suspect warned her to wear a *hijab* or her hair would be clipped again by force. Shameera now wears a *hijab*.

Maimona, another victim, said a man cut her hair while she was standing outside a department store here.

She now carries a knife to protect herself from the hair cutters.

"Just let them try that again," she said.

Ustadz Jaafar Ali, spokesman for the *ulama*, did not confirm or deny the hair cutting.

But he said that under Muslim laws, women are compelled to wear veils.

"It is in the Koran and the Hadith (saying of Prophet Mohammad, S.A.W). Women