

*(Editor's Note: We received this call for action sent by several women's and human rights groups and individuals in Egypt. They denounce the act of gender discrimination enacted in a university in their country against two female professors. It is important to mobilize before such a case becomes common.)*

It is with grave concern that the undersigned women's and human rights organizations and individuals in Egypt view the recent discriminatory actions taken against two female professors in the faculty of Science, Zagazig University. This discrimination, which contradicts the law and the constitution of the country as well as all human rights conventions to which Egypt is a signatory, was enacted through a decision by the Board of the above Faculty. The Board decided to exclude two female professors from the supervisory committee of a doctorate thesis of a post-graduate student, in acquiescence to the student's request to have no "female element" on the committee.

On 10 January 1995, the Board of the Science Faculty approved the request by a post-graduate student to change the supervisory committee of his doctoral thesis by taking away the committee's "female elements." The Board approved the decision of the Research Committee to replace Dr. Somaya El-Sheikh and Dr. Nabila Ismail with one male professor.

The chemistry section, to which the two professors belong and under which the doctoral student is registered, met on 18 January 1995 and unanimously refused the Faculty's decision. It noted that not only have the two female professors supervised many thesis before but that they have contributed since 1972 to the establishment of the chemistry section in the Science Faculty.

Responding to the chemistry section's report, the Research Committee withdrew its decision

and reinstated the original supervisory committee.

On 14 September 1995, the head of Zagazig University approved the decision of the Research committee, reinstating Dr. Somaya El-Sheikh and Dr. Nabila Ismail to their supervisory capacity over the student's thesis.

The student refused to accept the university's decision and filed a case with the administrative court. The court ruled in favor of the student.

We therefore appeal to all human rights, labour rights, and women's rights activists and organisations all over the world to raise their voices against this act of gender discrimination, as yet unprecedented in the history of Egyptian universities. We appeal to readers to stand in solidarity with the two female professors until the withdrawal of this "shameful" decision by the Faculty's Board, a decision damaging to the status of Egyptian universities as platforms for culture and enlightenment. Please send your appeals to the institutions listed below, most of which can be reached by mail with only the name of the person and institution written. This would also apply to telexes.

For further information call/fax (202) 3367186.

Send letters to:

The Egyptian Embassy in your country

Mr. Hosni Mubarak/President of Egypt

Fax: (202) 3555177

The People's Assembly

Fax: (202) 5748822

Mr. Hussein Kamel Baha-El-Din, Minister of Education

Fax: (202) 3553102

The Haed of Zagazig University (2055) 34552

*The New Women Research Center (NWRC)*

*The Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA)*

*The Association for the Development and Enhancement of*

*Women (ADEW)*

*El-Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence*

*The Center for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA)*

*The Legal Research & Resource Center (LRRC)*

*The Appropriate Communications Technology Center for Development (ACT)*

*Dr. Younan Labib Rizk, history professor*

*Mona Zulficar, lawyer*

*Dr. Nadia Farah, Director, Cairo Center for Development Studies*

*Awatef Wali, People's Friends Association*

## **VIOLATIONS OF WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

On 5 June 1996, the Mexican Social Security Institute's Solidarity Programme held a day clinic in San Miguel Pocitos in the municipality of Saltillo la Fragua, Puebla. This community of 1,300 people lives in extreme poverty. During what was supposedly an examination for the detection of cervical and uterine cancer, and without having given their consent, women were fitted with interuterine contraceptive devices (IUDs).

The women reported that the local government workers warned them that if they did not take part in this campaign, they would not receive their food allowances. Some days later, a number of women suffered from infections and vaginal bleeding, and after seeing the doctor, found out about the IUDs. The physician with the Mexican Social Security Institute's Solidarity Programme threatened that if the women reported what had happened, they would no longer receive medical care.

It is also reported that the Solidary Programme routinely fits post-partum and post-D and C patients with IUDs. This violates the women's right to make free choices as to the number of children they wish to have. Furthermore, similar cases are reported in communities in San Francisco, El Sabinal, and

# a c t i o n a l e r t



Gonzalez Ortega.

Please write to the Mexican government protesting these violations of women's rights. Impoverished women, without alternatives to health care, are being forced to take part in government-run health campaigns. In these campaigns, women receive contraceptive devices without their prior knowledge or informed consent.

Write to:

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo  
Presidente de la Republica  
Palacio Nacional  
06067 Mexico, D.F. Mexico  
Fax: 011-525-271-1764

Copies to:

Comision Internacional de los Profesionales de la Salud para la Salud y los Derechos Humanos  
Edificio 22 Depto 904

Villa Olimpica, Delegacion Tlalpan  
14020 Mexico D.F. Mexico

Source: The Sisterhood is Global Institute, 20 August 1996

### **SYSTEMATIC RAPE IN RWANDA**

The French relief agency Doctors Without Borders has reported that "the scope of rape in Rwanda defies imagination... It appears that every adult woman and every adolescent girl spared from a massacre by militias was then raped."

While the Hutu-led "ethnic cleansing" in Rwanda is well documented and well known—an estimated 500,000 to one million Rwandans, largely of the Tutsi tribe, were killed—reports of systematic rape as a tactic of war have received little attention. One survey, conducted in the capital Kigali and several other areas by Rwanda's Ministry of Family and Women's Affairs, estimated that between April 1994 and April 1995 more than 15,700 girls and women between the ages of 13 and 65 were raped. In all areas in which the Hutu militia massacred civilians, they also raped women. Some women were gang-raped, some were forced to watch their families murdered and then were raped, and some

were taken as "prizes" of war and coerced into living in the homes of the men who raped them. In short, according to the report by Doctors Without Borders, rape was "systematic, arbitrary, planned, and used as a weapon of ethnic cleansing to destroy community ties."

Many of the details of the circumstances surrounding the rapes have been provided by the women who survived. As the United Nations International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague continues to investigate the atrocities and to seek indictment of human rights violations in both Rwanda and Bosnia, these women's voices must be heard.

Source: Ms., May/June 1996

### **PLEA FOR PEACE**

May God's blessing be bestowed on you.

For the past 50 years, we have endured the Zionist terrorism. There are no words that can describe the nature and cruelty of these crimes. Some of these include forceful occupation of part of our land, destruction of our infrastructure, damaging of our plantations and crops and unlawfully consuming our water supplies, continuous air raids and shelling of villages and towns with weapons that are banned by international laws and the taking of helpless women and children as hostages and human shields.

After all these years of Jewish and Zionist hatred, the Israeli nation still has more to offer. They show their intentions to make peace by more shelling, destruction, invasion and crucifixion of innocent and harmless people. Israel had been successful in their Air-Sea-Land operations, attaining more than 50 air raids daily and more than 60 artillery rockets fired per hour from land and sea bases. And evidently, their targets are civilian cars, homes, hospitals, schools and even ambulances and pedestrians. Furthermore, they shelled and destroyed part of the

electricity networks and water tanks.

Last but not the least, they committed massacres, the worst of which was committed in the village of Qana, by shelling United Nations bases sheltering almost 300 civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly. Killed were 102 civilians; 150 were injured.

Israel's actions led to the evacuation of more than half a million civilians towards Beirut and the suburbs and the evacuees could do nothing but occupy schools, colleges and town halls.

From the heart of this resisting nation and in the face of the Zionist terrorism, we are urging you and all those who believe in humanity and human rights, to support and help us. Most of all, help us through mass media. In many press reports, the Zionist movement is able to hide the truth; facts are altered and forged. We are ready to provide detailed information, ranging from pictures, statistics and documents to help you in your efforts.

This is not just our cause but a cause for all mankind. We trust in your efforts and we are waiting your response to our call.

Your sisters in the  
Social Solidarity Association and  
Lebanese Cultural Association  
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Beirut, Lebanon  
Fax: 601054, 603468, 603469  
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Hajjeh Afaf Al-Hakim

