

THE HONOR OF A WOMAN

by Alistair Lyon

Peering at the world through a bluecloth mesh is a new experience for educated Kabul women, but few venture out without wrapping themselves in a *burqua* for fear of offending their new rulers.

Many women once strolled Kabul streets in bright dresses or jeans, with a loose headscarf their only concession to modesty, but now if they fail to cover up completely they risk abuse or even a public beating from young, black-turbaned Taliban warriors moving around the city in pickup trucks.

The Taliban moved swiftly to stamp their puritan interpretation of Islam on Kabul, ordering men to grow beards and stopping traffic five times daily for prayers. They have banned television, cinema and music and decreed that sexes should be segregated outside the home.

Women government employees have been told to stay at home, with a promise that they will be kept on full pay until Taliban leaders figure out how they can return to work without coming into contact with men.

The edict has hit hardest at Kabul's estimated 25,000 war widows, many of whom were employed in government jobs or involved in food-for-work programmes run by relief agencies. They are now left with virtually no means of support for themselves or their children, short of begging on the streets.

Source: *Dawn* 4, October 1996

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organizers of child-sex tours through a bill which makes it illegal for Britons to organise pedophile holidays abroad, with convicted offenders looking at life imprisonment. The bill also makes it an offense to conspire with or incite people to have sex with children abroad. This move comes after much persuasion from human rights campaigners who were rightly worried about sex tourists from the richer countries preying on children in the Third World.

Australia and Germany already have laws under which their nationals can be prosecuted for offenses committed abroad.

The British government also hopes to soon pass laws to prosecute sex tourists when they return home. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that there are at least one million child prostitutes in Asia alone, with the greatest numbers in India, Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines.

The first such offender to be indicted was a travel agent who was sentenced to 16 years in prison for having organized child-sex tours in the Philippines. Judge Fatima Asdala also ordered that he be deported after having served his sentence and that he be banned from the Philippines. "This act," she said in her decision, "promising sex with the young...in the guise of promoting tourism is considered in this court to be debasing of Filipino women and children."

But the most alarming case of child prostitution and abuse was uncovered with the crackdown on a pedophile ring operating from an

orphanage in South Goa headed by Freddy Albert Peat. He is currently serving a life term for sexually abusing, and trafficking in, young boys kept in his charge. In July 1996, the CBI charge-sheeted an Australian, a Swede and a New Zealander for being a part of this notorious pedophile ring. However, no arrests have been made so far, and all these known pedophiles continue to visit Goa, indicating a high level of laxity on the part of the local authorities.

Source: *Contours*, Vol.7, No.8, December 1996

DISCRIMINATORY BILL PROPOSED AGAINST MARRIED WOMEN

Women rights groups in The Ivory Coast have begun a campaign against a proposed bill on adultery that sets different penalties for women and men. The bill, proposed by Justice Minister Faustian Kouame, states a woman who has an extramarital relation will be liable to up to one year imprisonment or a fine of the U.S.\$630 to U.S.\$2,100. However, "men shall be allowed to have sexual relations with other women provided they have the consent of their spouses and pay them compensation of one million CFA Francs (U.S.\$2,100)."

Furthermore, the bill would grant a man the right to divorce on grounds of adultery with little more provocation than finding his wife engaged in seemingly intimate conversation with another man. For women to obtain divorce on grounds of adultery, their husbands would have to be caught in a sexual act at the couple's home with the same woman more than once.

BRITAIN BANS CHILD-SEX TOURS

Britain has decided to ban

According to Ms. Tomama Yai, a member of the Ivorian Association for the Defense of Women's Rights, such a legal change would further push women into vulnerable position in a society where the common practice of polygamy continues to perpetuate the sexual privileges of men.
Source: *Women's Watch*, June 1996

NUN CLOSES HOPE AFTER WORKERS STRIKE

A project meant to educate and empower women was shut down after its workers, demanding better compensation and job security, staged a hunger strike and joined a labor union.

The Human Organisation for Pioneering in Education (HOPE) in Pune, western India, closed down its handi-crafts production center on 29 July after its 49 workers went on strike following an attempt to make one worker leave.

The trouble began when worker Teresa Pillai was asked to retire by Chavanod sister Noeline Pinto, the Roman Catholic nun who founded HOPE in 1974 to promote women's advancement through self-development. Pillai, 61, had worked with HOPE for the past 22 years.

"This incident brought a sense of insecurity among the women and they joined the Pune Industrial Employees Union (PIEU)," said Jesuit Father Walter Saldhana, president of the Labour Research and Consultancy Bureau in Pune.

Mahila Sangharasha Sanghata (Forum to Fight for Women's Rights) and the PIEU supported the strikers, saying HOPE was

running a small industry and demanding the minimum wage, gratuities and provident fund for employees.

Forum president Shilpa Umbrajakar said that it was "ironic that an agency that professed to empower women and to bring hope to the hopeless was not heeding their demand for minimum wages."

Yamuna Mufe, 43, who worked with HOPE for the past 18 years, said that all of a sudden the workers received a notice saying the center would be closed permanently and payment due would be sent by post.

According to Sister Pinto, however, "these women were not employees of HOPE in the real sense of the term. They were women in distress who were trained to be self-reliant."

"Our center is not a small-scale industry or profit-making firm but an infrastructure for women to use skills they acquired through HOPE," the social activist nun added.

She said that the handicrafts activities were discontinued after the PIEU began to disrupt the peaceful and smooth functioning of the center.

The workers were encouraged to help themselves by forming a cooperative, "but they preferred to lean on the benevolence of the center," she said.

Source: *Sunday Examiner*, Hong Kong, 20 September, 1996

WORLD BANK IMPLICATED IN MASSACRE

According to a report released earlier this year by Witness for Peace and the International Riv-

ers Network, 376 people from the Guatemalan village of Rio Negro—about 10 percent of the 3,500 people in the region who were to be resettled for the dam—were killed in a series of massacres. The World Bank said that it was not aware of the 1982 massacre. But in 1985, it gave a second loan for the Chixoy Dam. The Witness for Peace report says: If the World Bank did know about the massacres, giving an additional loan to the project was at best a calculated cover-up, and at worst an act of complicity in the violence. If the bank did not know about the slaughter, then it was guilty of gross negligence. Either way, the bank is implicated in the horrors perpetrated against the village of Rio Negro in 1982. After an internal investigation prompted by the Witness for Peace study, a spokesman for the Bank denied any link between the resettlement for the Chixoy project and the murders, although he did mention that the staff were generally aware of violence in the area in 1982. He said that the civil disorder in the project area was considered to have been part of the widespread insurgency and counter-insurgency actions carried out in Guatemala in the 1980s. But villagers told Witness for Peace that the Guatemalan military went after the residents for resisting the project and refusing to be evicted. In one instance, in February 1982, 73 men and women from Rio Negro were ordered by the local military commander to report to Xococ, a village upstream from the reservoir zone which had a history of land conflicts and hostility with Rio Negro. Only one woman returned. According to the report, the rest were raped, tortured and then

