



Geneva Reporter

Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva

Women in prison

In August 2003 QUNO began research on the situation of women prisoners and the consequences of their imprisonment on their families. This work was undertaken as a joint project, involving the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) in Britain and other Quaker partners, such as the Quaker representatives to the UN Crime Commission in Vienna.

To date, QUNO has been actively raising the issue of women's imprisonment through statements to the Commission on Human Rights this Spring, and at last year's Sub-Commission. Recently, QUNO has completed its preliminary paper on the topic "Women in Prison and the Children of Imprisoned Mothers", which is available in hard copy from QUNO* and from the website. This paper examines a variety of problematic issues arising from the women's prison system worldwide, including lack of resources, geographical isolation, inadequate medical care, drug-related problems, mistreatment of prisoners, and particular difficulties relating to indigenous and foreign national prisoners.

*CHF 10 plus postage and packing. Those in the UK can also buy it from the Quaker Bookshop, Friends House, Euston Road, London, cost £5.)

In particular, the report examines in depth the questions which arise concerning women prisoners who are mothers of young children. In some instances, these children will be held in prison with their mothers; in others, they will be cared for on the outside by relatives, friends, or social services. However, it is clear from our findings that, historically, insufficient attention has been given to providing adequate care and support for the children of imprisoned mothers, and the consequences on the family are often long-lasting and severe.

In July the Sub-Commission on Human Rights addressed the issue of women in prison when it considered the report submitted to it by Ms Florizelle O'Connor, who was mandated last year to produce a preliminary paper on the topic. It asked her to produce an expanded working paper for next year and also added a new item on women to the agenda of its annual working group on the administration of justice.

In the meantime, QUNO and QCEA are continuing their research into women's prisons and have produced a number of questionnaires designed to elicit information from prisoners and former prisoners, prison staff, prison visitors, and any others who have dealings with the

women's prison system. QUNO and QCEA hope to distribute these questionnaires to as wide a range of prisons and countries as possible in order to try to put together a global picture of women's imprisonment issues. If you think you could help by completing or distributing such a questionnaire, or by putting us in contact with someone else who could, please contact:

sdavies@qcea.org or
rbrett@quno.ch

Good news is no news

Too often, the news focuses only on those conflicts which erupt into violence, but one of the roles of the United Nations is to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts. It is, therefore, welcome news that rather than going to war over their boundary dispute, two African countries, Benin and Niger, have instead asked the International Court of Justice to determine which of the islands in the River Niger belong to which country. It is worth noting that the UN has a Trust Fund specifically to help defray the costs of such ICJ cases for poorer countries.

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Why the “Nairobi Summit” Matters



Final preparations are being put into place for the upcoming First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Nairobi, 29 November to 3 December. To stress the importance of this Review Conference, this meeting has been given the informal title of “The Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World,” symbolizing global commitment to this living international commitment.

The “Nairobi Summit” has significance for a number of

reasons. First, it will be a gathering to celebrate the extraordinary performance of this treaty in its short life, having entered into force only in 1999. Second, it will be an opportunity to examine and recommit to the job which still remains to be done to universalize the Convention (at present there are 143 state parties), to complete mine stockpile destruction and the clearance of mined areas, and to sustain support for mine-affected individuals and communities. The “Summit” also has importance because of the significance of the

whole mine ban experience for thinking and action on multilateral approaches to arms control and disarmament. It is a pioneering example of what can be done with vision, will, and partnership among key actors, governmental and non-governmental. The “Nairobi Summit” will underline this too, with a flurry of activities, displays, and meetings above and beyond the formal dimensions of the meeting. For more information, see www.nairobisummit.org and www.icbl.org.

Staff Changes to the QUNO Family

The last few months have brought many changes to the QUNO staff. We were sad to see Rebecca Kmentt, our communications officer, leave at the end of June to return to Austria with her family. She did a wonderful job revolutionising many of our office systems, updating the database, dealing with the Reporter, working on TRIPS, dealing with publications and the Annual Report.

In mid-August, we also said goodbye to Rachel Taylor, our Programme Assistant who had been with us for 18 months. Her main project here at QUNO was working with Rachel Brett on the issue of women in prison, contributing particularly to the preliminary paper described on the previous page. Rachel Taylor has now gone on to take up an internship with the United Nations

High Commission on Refugees in Costa Rica, an experience which she tells us is quite different to Geneva!

Rachel’s role was quickly filled by Zahra Afshar, a law student from Bristol University who spent two months working with Rachel Brett and attending the Committee on the Rights of the Child. She left at the end of September to return to Bristol University and complete the final year of her degree. Rachel Brett has however managed to secure funding for another programme assistant and so Megan Bastick has now joined us from Australia for a year’s post. She is a lawyer by training and holds a Masters degree in international law from Cambridge University.

The programme assistant as funded by QPSW in Britain this

year is Rachel Barker. She has been at QUNO since the beginning of September and will be staying until the end of July 2005. She is specifically attached to the Disarmament and Peace programme but will also be organising the 2005 Summer School and helping with the general office administration. Her background is in anthropology and prior to her arrival in Geneva she was working at Friends House in London.

Brewster Grace, who retired as Director of QUNO in January 2004, has been continuing his work here in the office, handing over to his successor in Global Economic Issues, Martin Watson and tying up his work on TRIPS. He returns to the United States in mid-October.



Agreeing to Disagree – the WTO Process

On the 31st of July, the 147 Governments that make up the World Trade Organisation (WTO) reached agreement on an interim package that will keep global trade talks alive. The result according to Dr. Supachai Pantichpakdi, Director-General of the WTO represents "... an historic moment for this organisation."

The interim package sets out the terms under which trade negotiations will take place between now and December 2005, the new deadline for completion of the Doha Round. The package has already been strongly criticised by some civil society and special interest groups. Planned reductions in agricultural subsidies to European and US farmers have sparked outrage, with French farmers union FNSEA (Federation Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles) warning that *"Un accord à l'OMC ne doit pas remettre en cause l'ambition d'une agriculture française moderne et prospère"* – a WTO deal should not undermine the ambition of French agriculture to be modern and prosperous. Oxfam International has countered by saying "... rich countries are still failing to show leadership, pandering instead to vested interests ...". Agriculture accounts for roughly 10% of global trade but is a critical sector for the economies of many developing countries.

The negotiating deadlocks and stalled talks at the WTO hint at a larger process underway in the global trading system. WTO Membership has expanded rapidly to include the Governments of many poor and developing

countries. These members are altering the dynamics of trade negotiations and are beginning to challenge the dominant position held by the large trading partners such as Australia, the European Union, Japan and the United States of America. Deadlock at the WTO indicates that developing countries are becoming more effective in promoting their trade interests.

Most of the action is found with the G-20, a group of twenty leading developing countries that includes Brazil, China, India and South Africa. The G-20 proved to be an effective negotiating team last year at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancún, Mexico. Its origins however, relate back to work on TRIPS & Public Health at the WTO when developing countries succeeded in amending this trade agreement.

"Deadlock at the WTO indicates that developing countries are becoming more effective in promoting their trade interests."

QUNO has been working with members of the G-20 and other developing countries throughout the TRIPS & Public Health negotiations. This experience has shown that developing country coalitions can be amazingly strong and successful at the WTO. However, the level of cooperation required between developing countries is extremely difficult to achieve. Negotiators represent their governments and finding an issue around which the parliaments of twenty or more countries can agree is never easy. Agriculture is proving to be such an issue, but the WTO covers

many sectors in which developing countries are also economic competitors.

To complicate matters, it is also no longer certain that the rich, developed countries still see the WTO as serving their interests? Following the collapse of talks at Cancún last year, both the USA and EU embarked on a furious round of 'Free Trade Agreements' (FTAs), trying to get individual countries to sign up to the deals that they resisted collectively in Cancún.

The 31 July interim agreement is not perfect and, like any compromise, all sides complain about what they have given up. The 'historic' value of the agreement lies rather in the fact that negotiators have found new ways to work in the multilateral trading system, they have agreed to disagree. It is a 'political' framework that keeps open the door for a new trade round and reflects the changing dynamics of international negotiations. This, in essence, is what the WTO process is all about.

Did You Know?

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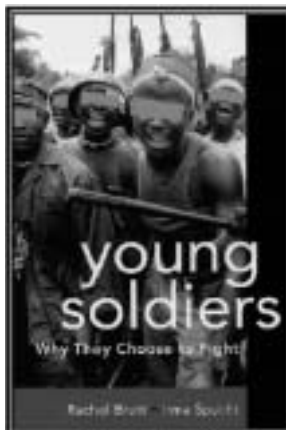


Prosecutions for recruiting child soldiers

Two significant steps in holding accountable those who recruit children as soldiers have been taken recently. For the first time, individuals actually face prosecution for child recruitment.

In May, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone dismissed the claim from Hinga Norman that recruiting children under 15 was not a crime, even though it is included in the Court's Statute. They ruled that at least by 1996 voluntary or compulsory recruitment of under-15s had become a crime entailing individual criminal responsibility under customary international law.

In June, the Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court announced that alleged war crimes are being investigated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (at the invitation of the Government), including the recruitment of children under 15 as soldiers. The Court's Statute includes the crimes of conscripting or enlisting children under 15 as soldiers or using them to participate actively in hostilities.



Book now available!

Young Soldiers examines the reasons adolescents, who are neither abducted nor physically forced, decide to join armed groups and as a result are classified as volunteers.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with the soldiers themselves, the authors challenge conventional wisdom to offer a thought-provoking account of the role that war, poverty, education, politics, identity, family, and friends all play in compelling these young men and women to join military life. They also address the important issues of demobilization and the reintegration process.

ISBN 92 - 2 - 113718 - X

Order from: www.ilo.org/publns or by calling: **00 41 22 799 6938**

(A shortened version of this publication is available in German from the website www.quno.org)

QUNO Appeal

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QUNO Publications, available online

May - October 2004

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| 14/04 | <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls - Report of the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (15 March - 23 April 2004)</i> R. Brett |
| 15/04 | <i>Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers</i> Preliminary Research Paper. R. Taylor |
| 16/04 | <i>Jugendliche. Warum sie Soldat werden</i> Terre des Hommes/Quaker-Hilfe Stiftung |
| 17/04 | <i>Former Child Soldiers as Refugees in Germany</i> M. Ludwig |
| 18/04 | <i>Conflict Resolution and Lessening the Demand for Small Arms: Summary Report of a Research Seminar Organised by the Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva) and Africa Peace Forum (Nairobi)</i> D. Jackman |