

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 45/01/97

UA 46/97 Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment /
Health concern

7 February 1997

UNITED KINGDOM Róisín McAliskey (f)

Amnesty International is concerned that the conditions of detention in which Róisín McAliskey is being held may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Róisín McAliskey was arrested on 20 November 1996 in Northern Ireland. She was detained under emergency laws and interrogated for six days in Castlereagh holding centre. On 27 November she was remanded in custody in London on the basis of an extradition warrant issued by the German authorities in connection with an Irish Republican Army mortar attack on the British army base in Osnabruck, Germany, in June 1996. On 31 November she was transferred to Belmarsh Prison, a men's prison. However, on 5 December, in response to worldwide protests, Róisín McAliskey was transferred back to Holloway Prison, a women's prison in London.

When arrested, Róisín McAliskey was about four months pregnant and suffering from various medical ailments, including asthma, an eating disorder and severe underweight. It was reported that because she was not receiving adequate medical attention, there was a danger to the continuation of the pregnancy. Róisín McAliskey is currently about six to seven months pregnant. The conditions of detention have led to a deterioration in her physical and psychological health, and give cause for concern.

As a Category A high-security risk prisoner on remand, Róisín McAliskey is strip-searched twice a day, morning and evening, as well as before and after visits even though she has "closed" visits, meaning that there is no possible physical contact between her and her visitor. Amnesty International is concerned that this regular strip-searching, especially in connection with her visits, may not be necessary for security purposes and may lead to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. She is also reportedly restricted to taking her exercises on the roof of the prison.

Questions have also been raised about the conditions in which she will give birth and whether she will be allowed to remain with her baby. It has been reported that because she is a Category A prisoner, she would not be able to avail herself of the facilities in the mother and baby unit at Holloway Prison, unless it was not being used by other prisoners. In Amnesty International's view, the outcome of this possible decision to separate mother and baby would amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and would damage permanently the mother-child bonding relationship. It is also unknown whether, if she was extradited to Germany, she would be able to keep the baby with her.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

1. To the UK Home Secretary:

- requesting that full medical attention be provided to Róisín McAliskey as required by her medical condition;
- calling for an end to any measures which may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including strip-searching and the lack of proper exercise and association facilities;

- requesting a guarantee that the mother will not be separated at birth from the baby;
- requesting that she be granted bail if the conditions of imprisonment cannot guarantee full medical attention, including obstetric care, and proper post-birth facilities.

Michael Howard, QC, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
The Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT, United Kingdom
Faxes: +171 273 3965
Telegrams: Michael Howard, Home Office, London, UK
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the United Kingdom accredited to your country.

2. Letters to the German Federal Court of Justice

- requesting a guarantee that if Róisín McAliskey is extradited to Germany, she will not be separated from her baby.

The President of the Federal Court of Justice
Herrn
Karlmann Geiss
Präsident des Bundesgerichtshofes
Herrenstrasse 45a
76133 Karlsruhe
Federal Republic of Germany
Salutation: Dear President of the Federal Court

COPIES TO:

The Federal Minister of Justice
Herrn
Edzard Schmidt-Jortzig
Bundesminister der Justiz
Heinemannstrasse 6
53175 Bonn
Federal Republic of Germany

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 March 1997.