

# "A LIVING TOMB!"\*

**A report on the High Security Unit for Women, at the Federal Correctional Institution, Lexington, Kentucky, and the new political prison planned for Marianna, Florida.**

"A novel category of political prisoner has been established by administrative fiat. A new kind of prison is being prepared to deal with this new category of offender."

—Report of the National Prison Project, American Civil Liberties Union, August 25, 1987

## A BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION CONTROL UNIT FOR WOMEN

The High Security Unit for Women at the Lexington Federal Correctional Institution is the first of its kind in the Federal prison system. It is an isolation and behavior modification control unit for women!

Five women are incarcerated there, in underground cells, with no natural light, under 24-hour video camera surveillance. They are Alejandrina Torres, Susan Rosenberg, Silvia Baraldini, Debra Brown and Sylvia Brown.

Ms. Torres, Ms. Rosenberg and Ms. Baraldini have been told they are there because of their political affiliations. Though they are serving terms of 35, 58 and 43 years respectively, they are not in prison for any violent crimes. Prior to their transfer they had experienced no problems within the prison system and had normal records. Yet it has been made clear to them that they can expect to live under these conditions for the remainder of their sentences, unless they are willing to renounce their political associations.

## A NEW, LARGER UNIT IS PLANNED!

After protests from the ACLU, the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, Amnesty International, members of Congress and others, the Bureau of Prisons announced that it was planning to close the unit. But then it was learned that another, even larger prison for women is being built within the men's prison at Marianna, Florida. It will house from 150 to 200 more women under similar conditions!

"This program sets up a hierarchy of objectives . . . to reduce prisoners to the state of submission essential for their ideological conversion . . . to reduce them to a state of psychological incompetence sufficient to neutralize them as efficient, self-directing antagonists. That failing, the only alternative is to destroy them, preferably by making them desperate enough to destroy themselves. . . . If remedial action is not taken quickly, the survival of the women will be in graver and graver risk."

—Richard Korn, Ph.D., Correctional Psychologist and Criminologist, The ACLU Report

## LIVING CONDITIONS AT AMERICA'S FIRST HIGH SECURITY UNIT FOR WOMEN

- Isolated underground. No natural light. Allowed outdoors one hour a day, except in winter (no warm clothing!). Strip-searched upon re-entering.
- 24-hour video camera surveillance. Guards keep daily logs of women's activities: what they eat, what they say, when they cry, etc.
- Almost total lack of sensory stimulation. Light beige walls, with virtually no other color. Sleep deprivation: Unit is brightly lit at all times.
- Random pat-searches and body cavity searches by male guards. Limited visitation privileges. Denial of religious freedoms; no communal worship; limited religious guidance.
- Denial of medical care. Crucial medical needs ignored and aggravated. Bladder infections go untreated. Vision problems caused by 24-hour fluorescent lighting are ignored. One woman's cardiac condition has worsened; another hospitalized because of weakened health condition. All suffer digestive problems and severe weight loss.

"The General Board of Global Ministries team was told by the warden that behavior, bad or good, has no relationship to a woman's assignment to the High Security Unit or her chances of leaving it. . . . The five women currently in HSU should not be allowed to remain there. Additional months of isolation may have irreversible and devastating effects."

—Report of General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, September 1987

"The officials who imposed this limitation are not unsophisticated, illiterate provincials in some penological backwater. They are nothing if not carefully deliberate, in every detail. They know what they are doing, and why they are doing it. . . . Cosmetic changes will not alter the reality of this unit, as it was designed and operates. It is a living tomb\* for the women who are assigned to it."

—The ACLU Report.

WHY, while we show concern for human rights throughout the world, is the Justice Department building an even larger political prison in Marianna, Florida, to house 200 more women—even as it denies the existence of political prisons in the United States?

HELP THE LEGAL BATTLE TO WIN HUMANE TREATMENT FOR THESE WOMEN! • STOP THE BUILDING OF AN EVEN LARGER POLITICAL CONTROL PRISON! • Tax deductible contributions should be made out to IFCO (Inter-Faith Council) and marked "For the Lexington Campaign." Mail to: National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Women's Control Unit, 294 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

### What You Can Do

1. Contact the National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Control Unit at (415) 561-9055, to become involved. Set up a video showing or speaker in your home or class. Make a donation (tax-deductible to IFCO/Lexington Campaign). 3543 18th St #17, San Francisco CA 94110.
2. Send a letter of support to the imprisoned women: Alejandrina Torres, #92152-024; Susan Rosenberg, #03684-016; Silvia Baraldini #05125-054. HSU Lexington, Lexington, Kentucky 40511. Break the isolation by putting them on your organization's mailing list.
3. Write to Congress to urge a Congressional hearing on the control units. Pat Schroeder, 2410 Rayburn HOB, Wash. DC 20515; Howard Berman, 437 Cannon HOB, Wash DC 20515; Dan Lungren, 2440 Rayburn HOB, Wash. DC 20515. Berman and Lungren are California Representatives.