AIMS For a better birth...

Women Prisoners Overseas

AIMS sent a fax to the members of ENCA, the European Network of Childbirth Organisations asking them for information about the treatment of pregnant women prisoners in their country. So far, Germany and Hungary have sent information, Luxembourg is trying to find out.

GERMANY

Pregnant women have special conditions. *Open imprisonment:* the pregnant women can go in and out of prison from 7.00am to 6.00pm. It is possible, for example for them to go to work outside the prison. *Half-open imprisonment:* the pregnant woman is allowed to leave the prison at regular times (e.g. 10-12am) and their absences are controlled more closely. This is for women who have run away from open imprisonment in the past.

The cell doors are not locked during the day. The windows have no bars. The rooms have a private atmosphere. They are free to participate in normal childbirth education courses outside the prison. Prenatal care takes place at the gynaecologists practice (just like all other women in Germany). The woman is not accompanied by guards when she visits the doctor. However, she is accompanied by someone from prison for the first few visits to make sure that she knows where to go and what to do.

For the birth the women go to the local hospital without a guard. In some cases she might be accompanied by a support person (social worker, psychologist etc.). No chains or handcuffs!

Note: This is the "official" version. A radical German newspaper, about a year ago, had an article about a German woman forced to deliver with handcuffs on. ENCA Germany thinks that this woman may have been a political prisoner (in the eyes of the government, a terrorist), or asylum seeker, both of which (unofficially) receive worse treatment.

HUNGARY

It has not been easy to find out this information, but pregnant women are jailed. Women are released half way through their pregnancy, (it is not clear from the fax whether the release is temporary or not). They are not released in more serious cases.

There is only one jail-hospital in the country, all pregnant women are taken there, at least 1 month before they are due.

Women guards take them to the jail hospital, but there are no guards with them in the hospital since the whole hospital is watched as a jail.

Women are never chained. After the Birth they can stay in the hospital for at least six months and up to

one year.