

Quote/Unquote

“Three men inmates entered her cell, apparently given access to the isolation unit by guards. They dragged her from the cot, punching and pulling her. One pinned her down on the floor and clamped her with handcuffs; another forced open her legs; the third penetrated her. Repeatedly she was beaten, raped and cursed. She blacked out and lost track of time. Her only memory was of the grotesque pain of being sodomized for what seemed like an eternity. In a parting shot, one of the inmates turned on his way out the door and urinated on her. At that moment, Robin, although semiconscious recognized this inmate as the lone assailant who launched the initial attack. For days after the assault, Robin’s body was weak and wracked with pain. She bled continuously from her rectum. Repeated requests for medical services were denied. Approximately two weeks later she was relocated to the women’s facility. Thirty-five days after the initial attack, she finally received a medical examination.”

(<http://www.amnestyusa.org/rightsforall/women/stories/robin.html>)

“Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity it does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.” (International Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment).

“I was put on eyeball status, stripped of belongings, clothing, placed in a room with nothing but a plastic mattress on the floor. Watched 24 hours a day by a man or a woman... I was very humiliated, degraded. Being on eyeball status with male officers, my depression intensified. I didn’t want to be violated any more than I already was, so I put the mattress up against the window. When I did that I was in violation because they couldn’t see me. The door was forced open, I was physically restrained in four-point restraints - arms, legs spreadeagled, tied to the floor, naked, helmet on head, men and women in the room.”

(<http://www.amnestyusa.org/rightsforall/women/stories/elizabeth.html>)

“Women in prison are perhaps the world’s weakest constituency, virtually deprived of all rights and guarded by men who often abuse their power. Since 1979, the number of women in prison in Pakistan has increased

sharply. Most have been imprisoned under Pakistan’s extremely punitive interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, ... , which criminalize sex outside marriage. The laws also criminalize rape but the burden of proof is very heavy. To obtain the maximum punishment, women must have four male witnesses and they may not testify on their own behalf. Typically, lesser punishments are sought and women may testify, although their testimony carries minimal weight. Rape victims who fail to prove they have been sexually assaulted are subsequently accused of fornication and are often imprisoned or publicly flogged. According to human rights lawyers in Pakistan, more than 70 per cent of incarcerated women reported being abused by their guards. Reported abuses include slapping, beating, suspension in the air by hands tied behind the victim’s back and gang rape.” (Panos Briefing: *The Intimate Enemy*, p.7)

“The number of people incarcerated in prisons, jails and other places of detention around the world continued to rise during 2001, with few countries reporting decreases in their inmate populations. The resulting high levels of overcrowding - since rarely did new construction keep pace with the growth in inmate numbers - encouraged a range of chronic abuses. In some countries, mass killings, large-scale prisoner protests, or scathing official reports on prison deficiencies drew media attention to these abuses. More commonly, however, human rights violations against prisoners drew little public notice. Particularly in countries plagued by high rates of violent crime, too often reports of violence against prisoners, inhuman prison conditions, and egregious levels of overcrowding met with apathy and indifference. With the public primarily concerned about keeping prisoners locked up rather than about the conditions in which prisoners were confined, little progress was made toward remedying these problems.”

“During the first few days, I had not shut my eyes at all. From the very first day, I’d been liberated from the geckos, cockroaches and mice - everything except those little creatures which bite the skin of the head or crawl during the night below one’s underclothes to disappear between folds of skin. Many nights passed before I could free myself of these as well - but then my presence triumphed over theirs and I became capable of sleeping as if they were not there. I couldn’t sleep deeply at all, though. On that bed, I could never get my backbone into a straight position. Some part of my body would always sink between the slats, nearly touching the floor. Sleeping on the ground would have been preferable if it had not been for those creatures who crawled by night from the enclosure into the cell. Small animals and insects entering through the bars .. chirping, whistling, squeaking, biting, overturning tins and plates.” (Nawal El-Saadawi, *Memoirs from the Women’s Prison*, p. 86)