
Repercussions of Torture

A STUDY OF CHILEAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN DENMARK

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JUST as, in some countries, adults are imprisoned because of political, religious, or other ideological opposition to the prevailing regime, so, too, are many children arrested, with or without their parents. Several examples are known—in Latin America and South Africa, for instance—of children spending a long time in prison or prison camps, under conditions of poor hygiene and poor nutrition.¹

An increasing number of pregnant women are being arrested and deliver their babies in prison. Some of these infants are removed from their mothers immediately after birth and are never heard of again. Other children are born in prison to mothers raped by prison staff.²

Children may witness the often brutal arrest of one or both parents, and even their torture, abduction, or execution. Or they may be left unexpectedly on their own, at home or in the street, if their parents are arrested.²

Some children are born after their fathers have been arrested or executed and have thus never seen them. To others, a longlasting separation from one or both parents is an enormous mental strain, causing anxiety and insecurity.^{1,2}

Children are also used as witnesses in legal proceedings or as hostages. In the latter case, there is evidence that children have been present while their parents have been tortured, or that children have been tortured in front of their parents to "make the parents talk" (Latin America, South Africa, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia).^{1,2}

There are also records of the rape of small girls and mass execution of children (Ethiopia, Central African Empire, El Salvador).²

To help children who themselves and/or whose parents have been subjected to physical and/or mental torture, a special paediatric group was established in 1976 by the Amnesty International Danish Medical Group.