

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

November 1995



(INTERCEDE)

PRESSURE MOUNTS TO FREE SARAH BALABAGAN

Sixteen year old Sarah Balabagan, a Filipina domestic worker, was sentenced to death by a firing squad in September by the appeals court in Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates(U.A.E) for killing in self-defence. The employer who raped her is Mohammad Abdallah al-Baloushi.

Bowing to pressure, in Islamic ceremonies held October 15, 1995, the son of Sarah's rapist, "accepted" the apology made by Sarah's father and mother and indicated his family's forgiveness.

Reports state that the al-Baloushi's are no longer insisting that Sarah be executed, which will hopefully impact on the decision of the Appeals Court hearing scheduled for October 30th.

Various women's groups, advocates and supporters continue to pressure for Sarah's acquittal and safe repatriation to the Philippines. On October 30th demonstrations will be held in the Philippines to demand freedom for Sarah.

Sarah's ordeal had started when she was only 15. She had left the Philippines to go work as a domestic worker in the Middle East for Mohammad Abdallah al-Baloushi. After only two months of working Sarah was raped at knife point by her male employer. During the struggle she got the knife away from him and stabbed him repeatedly.

In July 1994 Sarah was charged with killing her employer. She did not deny the accusation but stated that it was in self-defence.

Under Islamic laws, any Moslem who kills in defense of honour, faith, land and property will be exonerated. The Islamic court acknowledged that Sarah was raped. But the prosecution had argued that Sarah's acts were actually premeditated murder as she had stabbed her employer 34 times. After consulting with the children of al-Baloushi to determine their wishes, Sarah was sentenced to seven years in jail and to pay a fine of US\$40,000 as "blood money" to the employer's family. In return, Sara received US\$27,000 in damages for the assault.

When Sarah's defence lawyers appealed for a lighter penalty a retrial was ordered. It was then that the appeals court reversed the earlier decision and met the sentence of execution by firing squad.

In a statement to be read at the Cross-County Day of Action and demonstration against the "Head Tax", October 28, INTERCEDE makes an appeal for Sarah's life by:

1. Appealing to the United Arab Emirate Court to acquit Sarah and provide safe repatriation to her home country addressed to:

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You Are Welcome

DOMESTIC WORKERS AND CAREGIVERS

Live-in or live-out, caregiving in hospitals or senior homes,
on temporary or open permit, immigrant or citizen

Next INTERCEDE Meeting, **Sunday, November 5, 1995**
3 to 5 p.m. Cecil Community Center, 58 Cecil St.
(one block South of College St. off Spadina Ave.)

Topic: **BREAST CANCER - SCOURGE OF WOMEN**
Presenter: "Women's Health in Women's Hands",
A Community Health Centre Helping Women

From Pg 1

His Excellency Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan
President
Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

His Excellency Fidel V. Ramos
President, Republic of the Philippines
Malacanang Palace
Manila, Philippines

2. Demanding that international standards of labour and human rights be enforced to protect all women migrants wherever they may be working. It is INTERCEDE's position that domestic workers should receive rights and protection under the law equal to that of the citizens of the host country.

3. Asking the Canadian government to ask the UAE government for Sarah's freedom and safe return to the Philippines.

The rights of migrant workers must be protected. These workers who are mostly from developing countries are often forced to leave their homeland in order to provide for their families, to make a better life for themselves and to help their governments pay off their financial debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It is estimated that over 7 million migrant workers from the Philippines are working in different parts of the world, in addition to the millions of workers migrating from other countries.

DID YOU CHANGE ADDRESS?

Please inform us by phone or mail so that you can continue getting your newsletter and we don't waste postage expenses for returned mail!

We must continue to fight for the rights and welfare of overseas contract workers. Help us to save Sarah and other domestic workers from similar injustices.

INTERCEDE ELECTS NEW BOARD

INTERCEDE's Annual General Meeting on October 1st kicked off with greetings from our President, Denyse Stewart and from the staff of INTERCEDE. In absence of the auditor, board treasurer, Cora Montilla summarized the results of our financial statement and confirmed that although funding had been reduced, we were not running a deficit this year due to reduced spending. Members and friends were encouraged to continue their patronage of INTERCEDE as their support was needed now more than ever.

The election and nomination procedures went smoothly. The Board of Directors of INTERCEDE for 1995-96 are as follows:

Returning members,
Denyse Stewart
Anelise Araujo
Cora Montilla
Evelyn Cruz

Re-elected members,
Joan Grant-Cummings
Ellie Bisenio
Jean Jovero
Beverly Richards
Maise Lai Kwan Mak

New members,
Cristine Da Costa Antunes
Myrna De Leon
Mila Ibanez

TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS since Oct 1994 (Does not apply to current members)

INTERESTED TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER? SEND THE FORM BELOW WITH PAYMENT.
IF NO RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION BY END OF NOVEMBER, WE'LL REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION NEW SUBSCRIPTION CHANGE OF ADDRESS

MAIL TO : INTERCEDE, 234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 205, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to :

NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

CITY/PROVINCE : _____

POSTAL CODE : _____ TELEPHONE : _____

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES :

INTERCEDE Members :	FREE	Non-member Domestic :	\$20.00
Non-Profit Organizations:	FREE	Others	\$25.00

From Pg 2

Denyse Stewart encouraged members to participate in the sub-committees of the Board which included fundraising as well as other committees that may arise on an ad hoc basis. People were reminded that INTERCEDE is about its members and that their opinions and contributions are important. After all, who knows better about what domestic workers and caregivers need than the workers themselves.

Daphne Parlane, a long time member and supporter of INTERCEDE, enthusiastically provided a variety of fundraising suggestions for the new year including a musical concert, bake sale, 'garage sale', dinner, etc. Watch out for these upcoming events in 1996! If you would like to assist in the planning or have additional ideas, please contact INTERCEDE.

The business part of the AGM ended with the approval of the amendments to the by-law which is a document which details the governance of INTERCEDE by its Board of Directors.

Guest speaker appeals for Sarah

Guest speaker, Vuyiswa Keyi, Health Promotion Coordinator for Women's Health and Women's Hands, just back from the 4th U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing, China stressed the importance of continuing to pressure the world's governments to commit to the equality of women and the protection of migrant workers.

Vuyiswa captured the attention of INTERCEDE members with her plea for support for Sarah Balabagan. As women, as mothers and as domestic workers, Sarah's plight touches us all. Sarah fought back against injustice, she fought for her Human Rights. Vuyiswa urged members to petition to free Sarah.

The meeting concluded with food and refreshments! Thank you to those staff and members who helped in preparing the food.

CARIBBEAN GROUP MEETING

Sunday, November 19, 1995

Call Carol to register 483-4554

INTERCEDE's Noise Barrage at September 6th Women's Day of Action

On September 6th, 1995, INTERCEDE staff and members joined the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and various other women's organizations at a "Tent City" raised at Queen's Park to stage a noise barrage against increasing poverty of the world's women.

The "Tent City" was Toronto's participation in an International Day of Action observed throughout the world during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

INTERCEDE member, Jessanita Guarin, read the demands and the dreams of the future from Migrant Domestic Workers in Canada that came out of the conference hosted by INTERCEDE affiliate, Vancouver's Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights and the INTERCEDE Cooperative Inc. held in August 1995.

"We were very happy with the action of INTERCEDE's members and needed to hear about the situation of migrant women in Canada," said Joyce Grigg, one of the "Tent City" organizers. "The noise barrage brought the women to their feet. We were linking all the exploitation women suffer today - it was very moving and inspiring!"

LIVE-IN AND LIVE-OUT JOBS AVAILABLE!

INTERCEDE has a list of employers who are looking for live-in or live-out domestic workers/caregivers. If you or a friend know someone who is unemployed, please visit or call:

INTERCEDE Cooperative Inc.

234 Eglinton Avenue East, S-205

Tel. No. 483-4554

Help INTERCEDE support the UNITED WAY!

As you may know the UNITED WAY funds hundreds of organizations including INTERCEDE to provide services to the community. Last year over 1.2 million people were assisted by United Way Agencies. Rather than giving a "hand out", the United Way promotes giving people a "hand up" instead.

You can also support the United way by asking your friends to make a donation. Make cheques payable to the United Way!

Please bring your donation to our November 5th monthly meeting or send your donations to INTERCEDE with the following information:

Name : _____

Address: _____

Wish to make a donation to the United Way in the amount of: ___ \$10 ___ \$20 ___ \$30 or \$ ___ other.

Please credit my donation to the fundraising campaign of INTERCEDE for the United Way.

We wish to thank the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Canadian Heritage; Multiculturalism Program; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Health; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); the City of Toronto Grants Review Board and United Way of Greater Toronto for their financial support.

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c/o INTERCEDE

234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 1K5

FIRST CLASS

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Canada Employment Centre	730-1211
Educ. & Skills Training Centre	
Labour Council	537-6532
Employ. Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Women's Health in Women's Hands	593-7655
Immigrant Womens' Health Centre	323-9986
Immigrant Womens' Job Placement Centre	488-0084
OHIP TORONTO	482-1111
SCARBOROUGH	1-800-263-3814
MISSISSAUGA	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Comm	326-9511
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9555
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Centro Para Gente de Habla Hispana	533-8545

CRISIS LINE

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre - 24HR	597-8808
Assaulted Womens' Help Line	863-0511

EMERGENCY HOUSING

Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636

LEGAL SERVICES

Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Community	
Legal Services	924-4244
Metro Toronto Chinese & SE Asian	
Legal Clinic	971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety	
Legal Clinic	971-8832

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 205,
Toronto, Ont. M4P 1K5

Time: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm

Tel: (416) 483-4554 Fax: (416) 483-9781

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator/Editor: Fely Villaşin

Counsellors: Columbia Diaz

Carol Salmon

Intake Worker: Eva Jacob