

IRISH PRISONERS APPEAL

24 March 1986

c/o Lambeth IBRG
245A Coldharbour Lane
Brixton, London SW9

Dear Friend,

This collection of press cuttings and other information is being sent to you with these three aims in mind:

1. To bring you up to date with the situation of Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, still held on remand in Brixton Prison.
2. To thank you for the work that you have done so far on their behalf and urge you to keep up the pressure to end strip searching.
3. To give you ideas and information to enable you to continue to lobby, campaign and fundraise.

As you probably know, Martina and Ella were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, along with several others in July 1985. After heavy interrogation, they were moved to Brixton Prison where they have been held ever since. They are due to come up for trial in early May this year. They are now experiencing strip searching at the horrific rate of up to 36 per month (Martina, November 1985). They are locked up in their cells for an average 21½ hours a day. The treatment that they are receiving is causing them "Significant distress" (Independent psychiatrist Dr Derek Davis, March 1986) and is severely hampering their ability to prepare their defence.

The Home Office and Prison Authorities have tried to justify strip searching on "security grounds". The thousands of strip searches carried out on prisoners in Armagh Prison, N. Ireland since 1982 have never revealed anything of a security risk nature. Metal detectors are available for use in Brixton and Armagh Prisons, but still the Prison Authorities prefer the use of degrading and humiliating strip searches.

So far the Irish Prisoners Appeal has been able to:

Fundraise for welfare of families affected.

Campaign for an end to strip searching.

Lobby MP's and Lords and get an "Early Day Motion" put forward by Clare Short MP. This motion was signed by 121 MP's calling for an end to the strip searching.

Regularly picket Brixton Prison.

Contact and work with other organisations who are concerned with the issue of strip searching.

Launch a fundraising drive for the cost of taking a High Court Action against the Home Office and Prison Authorities to end the continued strip searching and other ill treatment of Martina and Ella.

The Irish Prisoners Appeal is convinced that the constant harassment of these two Irish Women Remand Prisoners is a deliberate attempt by the Home Office to render Martina and Ella unable to conduct a proper defence in order that a conviction can be secured in the courts. Following the acquittal of Maire O'Shea on similar charges, the Home Office are even more urgently trying to secure a conviction against Martina and Ella. Conviction of Martina and Ella on these conspiracy charges would reinforce the consistent attempts by successive British Governments to criminalise political activity over the issue of Ireland.

This case is further linked to the massive increase in police powers in Britain under the new Police Act, and to the extradition and other so-called "security measures" in the Anglo-Irish Accord. If convictions are secured against Martina and Ella on conspiracy charges, the civil rights of people who are politically active or held on remand will be almost non-existent.

The Irish Prisoners Appeal urges you to:

Fundraise (Bank account details below)

Lobby MP's, Councillors, Religious Leaders.

Come on our weekly pickets of Brixton Prison from 11.30- 1.30pm every Saturday, at least until the trial in Early May. After that, contact the IPA for further information.

Campaign in your organisations, Trade Unions, community Groups and Place of Worship to call for an end to strip searching, and affiliate to the IPA

Send letters of support to Martina and Ella in Prison. (Address Below).

STRIP SEARCHING IS HUMILIATION AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT, NOT SECURITY

Strip searching is an act of intimidation, intended to degrade and to humiliate. The level of strip searching of Martina and Ella amounts to torture. It is sexual harrassment. Martina and Ella are being strip searched in a deliberate attempt to break their spirit and render them unable to conduct a proper defence.

Letters of support to Martina and Ella should be addressed as follows:

Ella O'Dwyer D25135
Martina Anderson D25134

HM Prison Brixton, PO Box 369, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.

Bank account number / details:

Irish Prisoners Appeal. Nat West Bank, Brixton, SW9.
Account number - 02478951. Sorting Code - 60-03-36.

Send cheques and postal orders payable to Irish Prisoners Appeal to:

Irish Prisoners Appeal, c/o Lambeth IBRG, 245a, Coldharbour Lane, London

Telephone (daytimes) 01-274-7700 ext 36

p&p Irish Prisoners Appeal, c/o Lambeth IBRG, 245a Coldharbour Lane. SW9

STOP THE STRIP SEARCHES IN BRIXTON AND ARMAGH