

## A SUBMISSION FROM SUE MADDERN, AUSTRALIA

To add further insights to our presentation at the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Headquarters, New York City, Sue, a registered nurse, sent us a copy of the submission she made to The Human Rights Committee, Geneva, on November 6, 1997. She made her submission based on the *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights*, '1503' Procedure – A "Consistent Pattern of Violations".

The reality Sue was asking the Human Rights Committee to address was that some victims of child abuse in Australia are also 'invisible' victims of torture. In presenting her submission Sue stated she was:

acting in the capacity of health professional and victim advocate [as] the victim(s) is/are unable to submit the communication himself/herself/themselves ... [that] advocating on their own behalf is inadvisable for torture victims, for to do so would render them vulnerable to further violations ... because there is no protection or appropriate response to their testimonies in Australia ... ."

Sue wrote further that:

These Australian children who are torture victims ... are effectively INVISIBLE victims in our community, as it is not generally accepted that the circumstances in which the individual/individuals is/are being subjected to acts of sadistic and systematic torture, could possibly be occurring.

In her submission Sue made the comparison that the methods of torture being used and the effects on the Australian child victim(s) of torture qualitatively parallel patterns of torture that are daily being reported from countries throughout the world. In item seven of her submission Sue provided universal descriptions of torture. We condense some of these as follows:

- ▶ Torture is a systematic and deliberate policy
- ▶ Torturers direct their assault at the very core of the person ... torturers aim to shatter the psychological structure of the victimized person's sense-of-Self at the most basic level of personal identity
- ▶ Torturers inflict massive psychic trauma upon the person they torture
- ▶ Torturers have systematized the institution of torture utilizing significant social science research as a part of their data base.
- ▶ Torture leads individuals to personal fragmentation [and/or dissociation] ... to suppress their feelings
- ▶ Torturers use a gradual process of torture that normalizes the violence ... for the 'induction' and 'instillation of fear'.
- ▶ Torturing is a tactic in which 'terror has no limit' ... inducement of panic and pain are but a means to an end.
- ▶ The social effect of torture is to create a reign of fear
- ▶ Torture has as its ultimate purpose ... to reduce the individual to primitive levels of helplessness and confusion

Survivors of torture, Sue's submission states, learn to distrust them-Self and their world view and to dissociate from their ordeals ... that the results of being tortured are individually catastrophic and individuals who survive sustain severe after effects. Sue's submission also attends to the need that it is now recognized that persons who have survived ordeals of torture require specific kinds of help including understanding responses from people within community, and from academic, media, and political, medical, therapeutic, legal, and investigative bodies.

Sue states in her submission to the Human Rights Committee that the Australian child victim(s) of torture she was advocating for consistently reported enduring methods of torture that paralleled patterns of torture based on a London-based study by Van Velsen, Gorst-Unsworth, and Turner that involved the following acts of torture:

1. Kicking.
2. Falaka [or falanga—beating to the soles of the feet].
3. Whipping or beating with an implement.
4. Binding, tying or use of manacles [shackle].
5. Electrical torture [electric shock torture].
6. Suspension torture.
7. Immersion in water or submarine [submarino—held under water].
8. Sexual assault.
9. Sensory deprivation, e.g., hooding.
10. Deprivation of fluid.
11. Deprivation of sleep.
12. Threats of violence and death to Self and others.
13. Mock executions.
13. Seeing and/or hearing others being tortured.
14. Extended time living under repressive violence.

In addition, Sue added the Australian child victim(s) also reported the following violations or patterns of dehumanization that led to their enslavement including:

1. Bestiality
2. Fluid forced into visceral organs. Enforced urinary catheterization, bladder filled with fluid, forced to withhold emptying bladder. Electric shock if non-compliant. Enforced filling of stomach with fluid.
3. Sharp or burning objects forced into genital orifices and bowels
4. Nails forcefully extracted
5. Forced to take drugs orally or injected intravenously or intramuscularly
6. Repeated anal raping
7. Forced to ingest faeces, semen and urine
8. Videoed during enforced pornographic acts and 'snuff movies'
9. Prolonged positioning of forced, stressful, and injurious flexions of the body
10. Forced into [child] prostitution
11. The repeated playing of taped messages used systematically and repeatedly in the context of isolation, sleep deprivation, electrical shocks

12. Drugging

12. Enslavement using degrading sadistic sexual practices, including enforced pregnancies, enforced abortions, and enforced participation in prostitution and pornography

In her conclusion, Sue stated the intention of her submission was to draw attention to the qualitative nature of the crimes that were being inflicted on some victim(s) of child abuse in Australia who are 'invisible' victims of torture. Sue wanted to show that the consistent pattern of violations that have been found parallel internationally documented torture methods and victim symptomology.

Sue also forwarded this response she received from the Human Rights Committee, Geneva:

*Received May 28, 1998*

*Reference: G/SO 215/51 AUSTL GEN*

*Dear Ms. Maddern,*

*I acknowledge the receipt of your petition, dated 6 November 1997, in which you request the intercession of the Human Rights Committee in the case of alleged violations against Australian children. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.*

*You should be aware that under the Optional Protocol, the Human Rights Committee may consider communications from individuals who claim to be victims of a violation by a State party of any of the rights set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

*It appears from the information that your are making representations on behalf of an unknown group of children without any reference to a specific violation and therefore I regret to inform you that the Human Rights Committee is precluded from considering your communication.*

*Yours Sincerely,*

*Helga Klein  
Chief a.i., Support Services Branch*

**Footnote:** This response from the Human Rights Committee helped us in our work and affirms why our letter to our Canadian Ministers and to The Committee on Contemporary Slavery in Geneva needed to be accompanied with signed "victim statements". [Click here to view our letter.](#)

Dated: September 26, 2004