

Santiago de Chile, March 22, 1984

Mr.

Ambassador of

Dear sir,

Through your means we want to bring to the attention of women of and your country's public opinion in general, the plight of women and of the people of Chile. We deem it necessary to do so as part of our struggle for life in our country.

Who are we? We are Chilean women from many different sectors, professional and blue-collar workers, students and peasants, artists and homemakers; women of all ages who have survived more than a decade of a deadly government system whose clearest signs have been assassinations, exile, disappearances, secret jails, torture, banishment, repression of dissidents and all kinds of power abuse and arbitrary actions which hit the poorest sectors of the population.

We accuse the military regime of plunging our country into the most serious crisis in history, an overall crisis which goes beyond the political, economic and social crisis. In this crisis, the future and the life of our nation are at stake. We live in a generalized atmosphere of violence, of growing poverty and unemployment; there are hundred of thousands of youths without any hope whatsoever in the future. This hopelessness turns many youths to drugs and prostitution, often at a very early age. All this explains our feeling of urgency when we fear for our fate as a people. We seek a future where life might have a chance.

We women have therefore declared a permanent state of mobilization, in order to confront what we consider is an inhumane government. We are not just women in pain, complaining about our country's tragedy. Last December, twelve thousand women met here in Santiago and made a pledge to struggle for life in Chile and to keep up this struggle until we put an end to this deadly regime.

The month of March was declared "Women's Month" and we made several peaceful demonstrations to publicize our purpose. On March 8 we suffered the government's repression: 33 women were arrested; 9 union leaders were held without charge

for 5 days at the order of the Ministry of the Interior and one of them suffered an abortion as a result of this ordeal. Gross mistreatment by the police force was denounced in several cases. X

The brutality of government repression has made it impossible to carry out other activities destined to denounce the violation of human rights, in general, and women's rights, in particular. Thus we decided to culminate this "Women's Month", addressing the women and the people of the world. Because what happens to the people of one country also affects the people of all other countries. It is to the conscience of Humanity -and to each man and woman- that we turn to denounce these crimes. Silence and indifference only condone these criminal deeds. X

In a few days -on March 27- there will be another Day of National Protest in which women will participate actively. We remind world public opinion of the recent massacre which took place in Chile on August 11, 1983, when 18.000 soldiers occupied the city of Santiago and there were 82 dead and hundreds of injured. Justice has not yet been done.

We know that those of us in Chile who want to put an end to this rule of death are a majority. We feel strengthened by both reason and morality in our struggle against the force of weapons, of greed and petty interests. We know that difficult and painful times are ahead in our struggle for life and democracy. We are, however, willing to run risks because that is what our conscience dictates.

We know also that the women of the world will understand us and that they would be willing to do the same: to struggle to regain freedom and leave the legacy of a decent country to our children and grandchildren.

We therefore request, Mr. Ambassador, that you make the content of this letter known by sending it through your Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the President of the Committee on Foreign Relations of your country's Parliament, in order that it may be included as a document in the congressional record.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,