

REVIEWS

PST Quarterly Inaugural Issue: Vol. 1, No. 1, April-June 1996.

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With the publication of the inaugural issue of the PST Quarterly a need for a forum discussing the psychosocial impact of violence on individuals and society in the Asia-Pacific region of the world has been met.

The inaugural issue of the PST Quarterly replaces the newsletter of the Secretariat and announces the shifting of the Secretariat office to the Philippines.

The phenomenal increase in violence all over the globe has resulted in a large number suffering from its impact. The editorial defines psychosocial trauma as an injury caused by an event, whether man-made or natural, which results in temporary or permanent mental, emotional, spiritual or moral dysfunction or maladjustment and which impairs a person's capacity to resume a healthy and meaningful life.

An increasing number of health workers are called upon to provide treatment to the sufferers of psychosocial trauma. June Lopez, Angela Guilar et. al. discuss findings from their survey of 383 physicians of the Philippine Medical Association on their knowledge, attitudes and practices towards the sufferers of psychosocial trauma. They found that almost one fifth of doctors in the Philippines have treated a detainee, while 55% were aware of the occurrence of torture. Most of the doctors surveyed did not agree with the statement that torture is an extremely rare practice in the Philippines.

Caroliza Pateros asks, 'Did doctors take part in the torture of prisoners?' She suggests that the medical associations should issue guidelines specifying that doctors should not be involved in torture. She also informs us that most doctors in the Philippines cannot identify signs of torture, a not uncommon finding in India as well. There is also an essay on the Draft Platform of Action of the Beijing conference, analysing its position on the violation of human rights of women.

The journal also gives information on research in progress, news and a calendar of world events on psychosocial trauma, thus making it very useful to concerned professionals and

researchers. A list of eight centres (including CEHAT in Bombay) doing work on PST in the Asian region is provided.

It also announces an educational programme for health professionals in the Asian region on Medical Ethics, Torture and Rehabilitation to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 1996. All those interested in participating are requested to contact the editors of PST Quarterly.

This twenty-four-page journal maintains high production standards. Details on subscription and the cost of a single issue are not provided. Individuals interested in getting a free copy of the journal should write to CEHAT, 519 Prabhu Darshan, S.S. Nagar, Amboli, Andheri West, Mumbai 400 058.

AMAR JESANI

Directory of persecuted scientists, engineers and health professionals.

Publisher: Science and Human Rights Programme, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington DC, USA. 1995. Pages: 220. Price \$10.

Scientists and health professionals do not work in a social vacuum. They are influenced and constrained by the social and political environment. If the goal of science and health care is to empower people, issues related to scientific freedom and social responsibility should be of central concern to scientists and health care professionals. It is therefore imperative that professional organisations of scientists and health workers continuously monitor freedom and social responsibility within themselves and in society at large.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has a permanent Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility. In 1976 this committee began a worldwide programme, titled 'Science and Human Rights Programme' on behalf of scientists, engineers and health professionals whose human rights have been violated. This programme is based on the premise that scientific societies should encourage international respect for human rights standards, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties, as a matter of scientific freedom and responsibility.

Since 1992, each year the Science and

Human Rights Programme publishes a Directory of Persecuted Scientists, Engineers and Health Professionals.

The latest directory, released in June 1995, describes cases of 524 professionals from 36 countries whose human rights have been violated. It provides detailed information on each professional, including name, profession, affiliation (university, hospital, healthcare centre...), the type of human rights violation (arrest, torture, disappearance...), date(s) on which the violation took place, charge, sentence, present status of the individual and the date on which the AAAS began action in defense of this person.

The directory also gives names and addresses of the relevant authorities to whom protest letters could be sent. In fact, one of the objectives of publication of this directory is to encourage letter writing so that pressure is exerted on governments to stop human rights violations. A sample letter for this purpose is provided.

The directory has succinct information on the status of human rights in India.

AAAS uses Science Human Rights Action Network (AAASHRAN) for building international campaigns for these professionals. The analysis of cases taken up by AAASHRAN is also included in the directory. It tabulates these cases into 74 professional categories. Of the 524 documented cases of professionals in the directory, 35.5% are engineers and 33.3% are health professionals. Thus, one third of the professionals suffering worldwide from human rights abuse are those providing health care. Such high vulnerability of engineers and health professionals is of great concern.

This directory is a must for all professional associations, human rights and other organisations and all concerned individuals. The professional associations in our country can learn much from it. They, too, must document violations of human rights and be counted in defending and extending the rights of our people. If we fail to do so, professionals would neither be able to safeguard themselves nor would they find it easy to preserve their professional ethics.

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