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U.N. Probers Tell of Torture in Chile

United Nations

A special United Nations panel yesterday made public its report on the treatment of political prisoners in Chile and expressed "profound disgust" at the kinds of torture that were described by victims.

The group, appointed by the Commission on Human Rights, issued the report to the General Assembly.

The panel, led by G. A. Allana of Pakistan, said the information came from many Chileans of both sexes, all ages, of many political convictions, or of none, some of whom had left Chile recently.

The Chilean government, after first agreeing to receive the five-nation group in Santiago reversed itself, compelling the members to take testimony from expatriate Chileans elsewhere.

"Although the present military government has been in power for two years, evidence recently recorded tends to reveal an increase in the resort to psychological torture, particularly in the form of moral pressure and the use of drugs," the report said.

"Some forms of torture were common to several cases, such as:

- "The application of electricity to sensitive parts of the body, including genital organs.
- "Rape and sexual abuse as a common feature of the treatment of women prisoners and detainees, in some cases repeated with intensity and resulting in death or severe psychological trauma.
- "The introduction of objects like sticks, the necks of bottles, and even guitar shafts, into the vagina or the anus.

- "Beatings, usually with heavy objects such as guns, wooden or metal sticks, chains, etc.

- "The 'Pau de Arara' — the prisoner's hands and feet are both tied together and a long piece of iron is introduced between the tied extremities. The body is suspended for hours.

- "Introduction of live mice into the vagina.

- "Torture by burns: Lighted cigarettes are used to burn different parts of the body, especially the chest, breast and penis.

- "Swallowing of excrement or immersion in sewage and the use of sewage water for consumption by prisoners.

- "Women are forced to lie naked on a cot, and trained dogs are made to run over their naked bodies, suck and bite their nipples, and in some cases rape them."

The report said that most of the witnesses had said they were blindfolded during interrogation and could not identify their torturers.

But a considerable number mentioned one individual, Oswaldo Romo, who did identify himself and boasted of his prowess.

Noting that the present Chilean government had been in power for two years without significant disturbance, the report suggested that the tortures might be intended to punish past political enemies or to extract information haphazardly.

"The fact that massive torture methods appear to be taught and learned by investigating

officers, whether members of the armed forces or not, as a technique or a new science, merely from the standpoint of their effectiveness and without consideration of any human standards, is ominous and calls for strong reprobation," the report said.

"The group feels that the question of torture and cruel and inhuman treatment, including threats to human life and the security of the person, and the allegations relating to the existence of 'concentration camps,' should continue to retain the urgent attention to all organs of the United Nations concerned in one way or another with the implementation of United Nations provisions concerning human rights."

Reuters