

amnesty international

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International Secretariat

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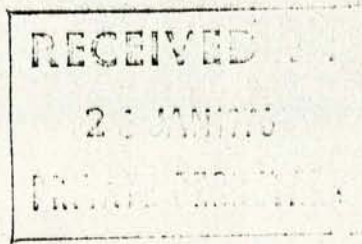


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cc Mr Mauer
Mr Caffery
Mr Wright
Mr Grant
S of S & reply
Mr Gabe January 1976

HE/CY/ET

Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins, MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AP



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Home Secretary

We are disturbed by the worsening condition of Mr Frank Stagg, an inmate of Wakefield Prison. While Amnesty International has not worked for Mr Stagg as a prisoner of conscience, we cannot help but regard the possibility of his dying on hunger strike as a matter of legitimate concern for Amnesty International on humanitarian grounds. It is our understanding that he has indicated that he would terminate his hunger strike on condition that assurances were given him that he would not be returned to solitary confinement. We are further informed that Mr Stagg was prior to his hunger strike subjected to prolonged solitary confinement as a form of punishment. If this is the case, there are strong grounds for believing that this demand by Mr Stagg is reasonable and should be acceded to as the possible price of saving Mr Stagg's life.

Knowing that there are precedents affecting supporters of both sides in Northern Ireland where conditions of detention have been the subject of government decision, I urge that on humanitarian grounds your office give assurances to Mr Stagg that he will not be returned to solitary confinement.

Respectfully yours

Hans Ehrenstrale
Deputy Secretary General

Secretary General: MARTIN ENNALS

PATRONS: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Great Britain · Roger Baldwin, President of the International League for the Rights of Man, U.S.A. · Danilo Dolci, Sicily · Professor Erich Fromm, New York and Mexico · Lt-Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, Great Britain · Jean-Flavien Lalive, Switzerland · Professor Salvador de Madariaga, Spain · Yehudi Menuhin, Great Britain · Professor Gunnar Myrdal, Sweden · Alan Paton, South Africa · Dr. Martin Niemöller, Germany · Sean MacBride, S.C., Ireland · Professor Giorgio La Pira, Italy · Professor Julius Stone, Australia

Mr Callaway
Mr Jolley
Mr R. H. Morris
Mr ED Wright
Mr Gale
Mr J Grant.



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26 January 1976

Thank you for your letter of 23rd January about Frank Stagg.

He was convicted with three others on 1st November, 1973 of conspiracy to commit arson and criminal damage; he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Prior to his present hunger strike, which began on 13th December, he has refused food over three periods for various reasons. On occasion these have included a wish for "political status", the central element of which seems to have been exemption from the work requirement. His present demands are apparently that he should be transferred from Wakefield prison immediately and then - if not now - moved to a prison in Northern Ireland; that he should not be required to work; and that he should never be held again in segregation.

While I have no wish for Frank Stagg, or any other hunger striking prisoner, to seek to take his own life in this way, there can be no question of my negotiating with hunger strikers. Indeed I have made my position on hunger striking clear as long ago now as 17th July, 1974 in a statement to the House, a copy of which I enclose. Frank Stagg has been treated fully in accordance with the procedures laid down at that time and is therefore aware of the consequences of a continued refusal of food.

It would be quite wrong for me to differentiate between those to whom most attention has been drawn while treating less favourably those who have obeyed the rules. There is no provision for "political status" in our prisons; all convicted

prisoners are treated alike, and it would not be possible to administer a penal system on any other basis. This has always been made clear to Frank Stagg and that is the reason why it would not be right for me to give any undertaking about his not being required to work.

I am not sure what you mean about Northern Ireland precedents, but what is clear is that Frank Stagg has no connection with Northern Ireland. He was born in the Irish Republic in 1941 and came to England in 1959, where he settled in Coventry, married a girl from Co. Mayo and bought a house. It has, however, been made clear to him that I am willing to transfer him to a prison that is nearer his home in Coventry.

Finally, you mention solitary confinement. Frank Stagg has been awarded periods of cellular confinement by the Board of Visitors at Wakefield under the prison rules. They had found him guilty of refusing to work. This form of punishment, among others, has been approved by Parliament and under the prison rules I cannot prospectively suspend the award of it or any other permissible punishment for a particular prisoner.

Ry. [Signature]