

Jaroslav Dobes and Barbora Plaskova should be released and allowed to stay in the Philippines

HRWF (04.04.2016) - The Filipino authorities should put an end to the detention of Czech citizens Jaroslav Dobes and Barbora Plaskova at the Immigration Detention Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan and should allow them to prolong their residence permit in the Philippines.

Dobes and Plaskova have been living in the Philippines for years without breaking domestic laws. Their arrest, detention and request for extradition by the Czech authorities are baseless, and do not align with the most recent court order. Originally, the Brno Court had sentenced Jaroslav Dobes and Barbora Plaskova in absentia to 10 and 9.5 years of imprisonment with strict regime for allegedly committing multiple rapes. On 21st May 2015 however, the High Court of Olomouc (Czech Republic) issued a resolution cancelling the decision of the Regional Court in Brno in its entirety, and ordered a new decision to be made. No new court decision has been issued as of 31 March 2016.

Detention Camp Bagong Diwa: "a dreadful place"

The immigration detention centre that Dobes and Plaskova are currently being held in is situated in the middle of the Manila police headquarters, with 2,000 officers housed in blocks surrounding it and a firing range outside the entrance. The facility once served as an extermination centre for opponents of the Ferdinand Marcos regime.

On 9 August 2015, Post Magazine published an article entitled "The Forgotten: Life inside notorious Philippines detention center" (*) which reported that: "Never formally charged with a crime, some of the 150 or so foreigners held here disappear into an opaque legal whirlpool and remain locked up for years or even decades. These inmates are known as The Forgotten."

A former Greek detainee Nikolaos Spanoudis, who spent 18 months in Bicutan before being released when the charges against him in a foreign country were dismissed, said in the same article:

"You see people there who have been inside for seven, 11, or 14 years," he says. "When you talk to them, you discover they have never faced a criminal charge."

"It was where Marcos' opponents were killed. From what the guards tell us, there is an area the bodies were thrown into, like a septic sewer thing. There are hollow areas beneath the floor in some places and you can tell something is below."

"Officials demanded US\$50,000 then US\$100,000 for his release and told him if he did not pay up he would 'rot' in Bicutan."

"In Bicutan, you were given a handful of food every day and there was only one telephone for 170 inmates and office staff to share. Conditions in Bicutan are just atrocious."

The Camp Bagong Diwa has also been hit by riots in the past.

On March 15 2005, a riot erupted at the maximum-security compound, leaving twenty-two Abu Sayyaf members and a policeman dead.

Several guards were killed and some inmates were held hostage during the riot, prompting police teams to storm the jail and kill the Abu Sayyaf members.

In May 2006, fourteen inmates were wounded in a riot between rival jail gangs.

Tensions gripped the prison compound anew at Camp Bagong Diwa when inmates at the Bureau of Immigration detention cell threw rocks and other hard objects at the jail guards, which left one inmate wounded on May 18, 2007.

Detention conditions of Master Jaroslav Dobes

Testimony of K.S. about her visits:

During my first visit in summer last year, I was totally shattered by the conditions in the prison. Small dirty overcrowded space without air conditioning. We sat with the Master on the floor, full of garbage, cockroaches, cigarette butts, cat excrements and there were even rats. There was no place without dirt to rest or to sit. There were very bad smells everywhere and enormous heat. Fights were on the daily order. Hygienic and life conditions were really harrowing. The master had infections and eczemas. Nobody cares about the health conditions of the prisoners. We brought him three different vitamins and ointments to the eczemas. Food is absolutely insufficient: a little plastic bag with rice and another one with overcooked vegetables. There was no place to eat in dignity.

During my second visit in autumn, the master's health had got substantially worse. He was exhausted and suffered from fever. Many times he was not able to move and during the whole visit he lied on the floor between garbage and cat excrements. The clothes we gave him in summer were hanging on him.

Detention conditions of Barbora Plaskova

Testimony of K.S. about her visits:

During my first visit in the women's section, the conditions were appalling, worse than for men. Women did not even have a small yard to walk (unlike men). They thronged in a little house and many of them did not even have their own bed. There were 30 women in that small place. There was no air conditioning and no ventilator. Every day, there were heavy fights between women. Barbora's health was pitiable. She suffered from infections and eczemas. She asked us for basic women's necessities.

During my second visit in autumn, Barbora looked haggard. She was in very bad health. She suffered from bad food, terrible hygiene and constant stress. She had lost a lot of weight. Although there were fewer prisoners than in summer, the conditions were not better. We brought basic hygienic necessities for other prisoners as well because they threatened Barbora with violence.

I have known Barbora and the master for six years. Their living conditions hurt me a lot and I am teary-eyed every time I think of them.

Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l strong recommendations to the Filipino authorities

Considering that for one year, the twenty-month old son of single parent Barbora Plaskova, has been left without parental custody since her illegal detention in the Bagong Diwa Camp;

Considering that the child, who has his mother's Czech citizenship, was left without his nursing mother at the age of five months;

Considering that the child is being temporarily taken care of by Japanese friends but could be left alone at any time;

Considering that since March 2015, the now four-year old daughter of Jaroslav Dobes and a Filipina unemployed mother, has been deprived of the presence and the support of her father;

Considering that neither Barbora Plaskova nor Jaroslav Dobes have committed any illegal act during the years they have lived in the Philippines;

Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l strongly urges the Filipino authorities

- **to prioritize children's rights and their well-being by releasing Barbora Plaskova and Jaroslav Dobes**
- **to grant them the authorization to go on living in the Philippines.**

This gesture of humanity would be highly appreciated by the EU and would be publicized by the Brussels-based NGO *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l*.

(*) See the full article with other testimonies about the detention conditions at <http://bit.ly/1SAdUDl>