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DETAINEES: MORE FACTS FOR SUZMAN

Political Correspondent

MRS HELEN SUZMAN, Progressive Party member of Parliament for Houghton, has once again been refused permission to visit the detainees being held by the Security Police under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act.

But she emerged from an hour-long interview with the Minister of Police with considerably more information about the detainees and their conditions of detention than had been released so far.

In an interview today, Mrs Suzman said she had put a number of points to Mr S. L. Muller and she had made a number of requests. During their discussion, the Minister told her that:

● All the detainees were in good health and they would be given full medical attention should this become necessary.

● Mr Mohammed Essop, who was treated in the H.F. Verwoerd Hospital and later in a prison hospital and whose treatment involved a Supreme Court case, was no longer in hospital and was now in "perfect good health."

● All detainees were now being fed very good food, and it was no longer necessary to allow them to receive food from outside. (Mrs Suzman said detainees' families had confirmed to her that the detainees were now being fed from an officers' mess.)

● Magistrates were visiting detainees regularly as required by the relevant sections of the Terrorism Act and they were submitting the necessary reports.

● In a few cases, detainees had been allowed to see visitors.

● The police were working hard on the different cases involving the detainees "in order to bring them to a speedy conclusion."

Mrs Suzman said she asked the Minister whether detainees had been informed that they were allowed to make written representations to the Minister of Justice regarding their detention.

She also pointed out that, if detainees were not given this information, they would not know what their rights were.

Mr Muller said he would look into this.

Mrs Suzman said she asked him whether it was not possible to frame regulations governing the manner in which detainees were treated because she had been told by their families there had been considerable disparity in the treatment of individual detainees and treatment varied from place to place.

He said it was not possible to frame regulations which would fit each and every case — although Mrs Suzman pointed out that there were regulations governing the detention of people held under the 90-day clause of the General Laws Amendment Act.

Different

Mr Muller said circumstances were different because under Section 6 detainees were being held for interrogation.

Mrs Suzman said she asked whether she could see some of the detainees, in particular one or two of the women.

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Mr Muller said visits were allowed only in "very exceptional circumstances" and Mrs Suzman could not see the detainees as such. "However, my impression was that he might consider allowing me to see one of the women detainees."