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Kenya Research project by Robert M. Press [see: Press, Robert M. (2006) *Peaceful Resistance: Advancing Human Rights and Civil Liberties*. Aldershot, U. K.: Ashgate.

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Interview conducted and recorded by Robert M. Press (bob.press@usm.edu; press.bob@gmail.com)

Location of interview: Nairobi, Kenya; in interviewee's home. The interview took place on the covered front porch of the Kinuthia home. From the front yard, one can see the state maximum security prison where he her son, Rumba Kinuthia, was held in detention after being tortured.

Date of interview: Oct 12, 2002.

Interviewee: Margaret Wangui Kinuthia, sister of Rumba Kinuthia (human rights attorney and activist in Kenya also interviewed; he was detained and tortured by the government.) His mother, Milcah Wanjiku Kinuthia and his sister and a dozen or so other women staged a public protest in a downtown park in Nairobi to demand release of their sons who were being held as political prisoners and, the women feared, possible execution. After a few days, police broke up the protest, but the women retreated to a nearby church and continued their protest there for one year, ultimately winning the release of all but one of the prisoners.

Note: BP =interviewer (Bob Press); MK = interviewee: Margaret Wangui Kinuthia. The interview was tape recorded. Some bracketed research notes by the author are included and a tape counter number. The ?? indicates uncertainty about the spelling of a name.

BP Margaret, why did you decide to join the mother's strike [to release political prisoners]?

Margaret K I joined them because my brother was inside. I helped organize the strike with my mother. I helped my mother. I felt very painful when my brothers were arrested. When I was outside [she was later picked up herself] I was very eager to know how my brother. I helped them decide whether to go to Mr. Wako's chambers to find out the big people who can help us. I was with them all along.

BP Who decided to go to Freedom Corner?

Margaret K My mother and father and Wangari and Mama Koigi. [??] In Nakuru there was an article in the press that we would go on strike in Nairobi. That was when my mother found some women who she was going to strike with. We went to Freedom Corner...and stayed there overnight. We did not eat or drink anything [as a TACTIC] to release her brothers.

BP Was there a plan to go to Kamati?? prison?

Margaret K To strike there, yes.

BP Who decided (not to go there)

Margaret K We, all of us...we said Kamiti ?? is very far [to hold a strike] and we would like reporters to come...that's why [we struck in Nairobi]

BP Tell me about your beating.

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Margaret K The police were beating me because I was like a reporter for those women. If anything happened I had to go tell them [the mothers]. I was often in town to learn what people were saying. I came from town and told them everything – what was going on in town. I was reporter for the mothers. I was beaten when I was brought in for one month. For four days I was not eating; for seven days, even water, even anything. [I went in to ask for Raila Odinga. They told me are going to walk out from here up to Parliament and to Freedom Corner. We told them [police??] there is no one who is going to run away. I did not run away; and we were so many. I stayed.

The police came and beat me and said: you can not go. I said, even myself I want to die because I'm very bitter because my brothers are inside and that's why I want to die. So that's why I can't run away. ...Raila Odinga ran away; everybody. So I was left alone, so I was beaten. They left me. Then one reporter from the Nation picked me up from the street. A reporter from the Nation.

...I was left alone. [The police] beat, me, they beat me and beat me. Then they left me there. My brother was inside. So I was thinking, what could I do so that they could be released? Because I could not eat or sleep or do anything because I was thinking about them.

BP Were you afraid?

Margaret K. About what? No, no.

BP Do you think the government should push the people when the government is doing bad things?

Margaret K. I don't know who could do that; I don't think ..we can do that.

BP But you did it – in 1992.

[Motivation: bitterness over brothers' detention]

Margaret. K Some people can do like that, but not many people. Me, I did it because I was bitter about my brothers [imprisonment]. Also I was beat up because I was inside. I know how they try to 'test' them [torture?]

BP Were you mistreated in prison?

Margaret K. No, not much. They did give me something to eat. [She was not beaten – in prison]

[Detained and tortured]

BP When you were taken to Nyayo House, what happened. [Here I had to distinguish between the torture that often took place in a downtown government office building – Nyayo House – from the prison where people generally were not tortured, though conditions were horrible according to human rights reports and people died for lack of medical care.]

Margaret K They were beating me and [made me] sleep in the water [flooded cell]. Sleeping down in the water....I could not see outside for nine days. I lost track of time. I could not tell whether it was day or night. They continued beating me and asking me where I had been feeding the mothers...whether we

wanted to overthrow the government. I stayed one day [in a water-flooded cell]. I could not sleep or sit down. They beat me with small sticks.

BP Did they beat you hard?

Margaret K Yes. You can see. [Shows lasting bruises on her limbs. She also shows wrist burns from a rope they had used to tie her when they took her out of her cell for interrogation. Her wounds, she says, still hurt, a decade later]. I never knew where I was because I was blindfolded.

[Altogether she was locked up for 2 months and 9 days]

I could not stop fighting the government. I went on, on, until my brother was released.