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### Letter from Mildred Persinger to the Editor, New York Times, September 1, 1995

Mildred Emory Persinger

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September 1, 1995

Letters to the Editor  
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To the Editor:

Many thanks for your almost daily coverage of the Beijing women's conference and forum. As one who was involved in the three previous United Nations world conferences and non-governmental organizations (NGO) forums on women, let me remind you that China is only the latest host government to harass participants.

Entrance to the 1975 Mexico forum was tightly, sometimes forcibly, controlled by Mexican guards, as was access to the microphones. Yet cadres of disrupters, with the cooperation of the sound technicians, attempted to prevent discussion, sometimes creating chaos in the meeting halls. More than once, delivery of the forum newspaper was intercepted and delayed, even all day. Boxed copies of a document to be debated and submitted to UN conference officials were spirited away, unopened, to the city dump where a few were hastily retrieved by women in cabs. Harassment had begun even before the meetings began. Mexican customs withheld the thousands of printed programs brought personally by leaders well before the forum's opening. For three days participants had to depend on posted notices and a limited number of xeroxed copies of the guide to their meetings.

Nairobi forum participants in 1985 also had trouble with customs. Some organizations that had planned elaborate presentations with slides and film were unable to obtain release of their materials. Demonstrations beyond the forum grounds were strictly prohibited. However, by far the most shocking government intervention was the sudden, wholesale eviction of forum participants from their hotels.

The exception to this pattern was the 1980 Copenhagen forum. Despite reports of rough police treatment of demonstrators, the Danish government did honor its agreement that the forum would be free, open and uncensored.

Mildred Persinger  
Chair, Organizing Committee  
1975 NGO forum

*Mildred Persinger*