

PUBLIC

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Forcible return/Fear of torture or other ill-treatment

EGYPT

Maskhud Supyanovich Abdullaev (m), aged 22, student, Russian national
Zina Mustapaeva (w), Russian national
Zalina Tarzaeva (w), Russian national
Usam Akhmadov (m), Russian national
Mahomad-Amin Adikhadzhiiev (m), Russian national
Akhmad Azimov (m), Russian national

The Egyptian authorities intend to forcibly return student Maskhud Abdullaev, a Russian national from Chechnya, on 18 June at noon on a flight from Cairo International Airport to Moscow, Russia. If he is returned to Russia, he will be at risk of torture or other-ill-treatment. Egypt is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture, which expressly prohibits the return of anyone to a country where they would be at risk of torture. Maskhud Abdullaev would be at heightened risk because his father, Supyan Abdullaev, is the leader of a Chechen armed group. The five others are also to be returned on the same day and would also be at risk. All say they had refugee status in Azerbaijan before moving to Cairo to study. All are currently held at the premises of the Office for Emigration and Passports, which is under the Ministry of the Interior in central Cairo.

Maskhud Abdullaev has been studying in Cairo since February 2006 at Al-Azhar Islamic University. He was arrested on 27 May 2009 by State Security Investigations (SSI) officers, and was then detained incommunicado in Tora prison near Cairo. The other four were apparently detained in al-Qanater prison, near Cairo. Dozens of other foreign students were arrested at the same time in waves of arrests targeting foreign students of Al-Azhar Islamic University.

Four other Russian nationals, who had been arrested during these raids, were deported on 9 June 2009. Russian Federal Security Forces and Chechen security forces were seen waiting for them at the airport in Moscow. The students were handcuffed and taken for questioning. Three of them have since been released, but the whereabouts of the fourth are unknown: he is believed to have been detained by the Chechen security forces and transferred to Chechnya.

The deportation of Maskhud Abdullaev and the others is being arranged by the Russian Consulate in Cairo and the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, who have instructed relatives or acquaintances of all six to book flights for them from Cairo to Moscow, and nowhere else; they would not be flown to Azerbaijan. Their requests to be flown to Azerbaijan where they are believed to have refugee status have been denied.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the early hours of 27 May 2009, the SSI conducted waves of arrests among foreign students at Al-Azhar University. Among those arrested were about 35 Russian students, mainly from Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, as well as students from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the UK and France. The students were arrested, and had their residences searched, without warrants. According to a statement of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, such steps were taken as precautionary measures to ensure that they were legally resident in Egypt, and as the Ministry suspects foreign students might have links with a group of seven al-Qaeda suspects under investigation for the bomb attack at **al-Husayn** historical district, Cairo, of 22

February 2009, which left one dead and injured many others. On 23 May 2009, the Ministry of Interior had announced the arrest of the suspects and said these had been recruiting foreigners, including students. Most of the arrested students were released within days but some of them were reportedly deported to their home countries, including students from Tajikistan. Other students might still be in detention for investigation.

Amnesty International regularly receives reports of detainees being tortured or otherwise ill-treated across the Russian Federation, and of the authorities failing to investigate such reports effectively, or bring those responsible to justice. In Chechnya, excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, deaths in custody, torture, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances and other serious human rights violations are regularly recorded. Trials of suspected armed opposition members have been marked by violations of international fair trial standards. In particular, there have been persistent and credible reports that ethnic Chechen and Ingush men have been charged with and convicted of terrorism-related offences, based on forced confessions and testimony extracted under torture.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or your own language:

- urging the Ministry of Interior not to forcibly return Maskhud Abdullaev or any other Russian nationals, who would be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment if returned to Russia;
- urging the authorities to allow Maskhud Abdullaev and the other Russian nationals to meet representatives of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo to assess their protection needs.
- Urging the authorities to grant them access to lawyers of their choice to challenge their deportation, their families, and provide them with any medical attention they may require;

APPEALS TO:

Minster of Interior

Minister Habib Ibrahim El Adly
Ministry of the Interior
25 Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20 22 796 0682
Email: moi@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General

Counsellor Abd El-Megeed Mahmoud
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, EGYPT
Fax: +20 22 577 4716
Salutation: Dear Counsellor

COPIES TO:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights

Wael Abu al-Magd
Human Rights and International Humanitarian and Social Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, EGYPT
Fax: +20 22 574 9713
Salutation: Dear Deputy Assistant Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 July 2009.