

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 12/30/99

UA 198/99

Fear of torture

4 August 1999

EGYPT

Magdi Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Magdi Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar, who was forcibly returned to Egypt by the Saudi Arabian authorities on 30 July 1999. He is now believed to be detained incommunicado at the headquarters of the State Security Investigation Department (SSI) in Lazoghly square, Cairo, where torture is routinely used.

Magdi Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar had been a legal resident working in Saudi Arabia since 1991. It appears that he was forcibly returned and detained because he is the brother of Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar, an alleged member of the armed Islamist group *al-Jihad* (Holy Struggle). Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar was sentenced to death *in absentia* in a military trial in 1997 and forcibly returned from Albania in July 1998 (see EXTRA 53/98, 4 August 1998, MDE 12/42/98, and follow-up, MDE 12/52/98, 12 November 1998; and UA 66/99, MDE 12/11/99, 7 April 1999, and follow-up, MDE 12/14/99, 20 April 1999).

Both brothers were charged in the so-called "Returnees from Albania" trial. Magdi Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar was acquitted *in absentia* of all charges by the Supreme Military Court in Cairo in April 1999, but Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar, already facing imminent execution from his previous conviction, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

During the "Returnees from Albania" trial, 13 defendants, including Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar, claimed they had been tortured in incommunicado detention. Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar withdrew his confession, arguing that it was extracted under torture while he was held in the SSI headquarters in Lazoghly. No independent investigation has so far been carried out in response to his allegations of torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture of political prisoners in Egypt is common, particularly at the SSI headquarters in Lazoghly Square, but also other SSI branches, at police stations and occasionally prisons. The most common methods reported are: electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles, burning with cigarettes, and various forms of psychological torture, including death threats and threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or their female relatives. Despite hundreds of complaints of torture reported by lawyers and local human rights groups to the Public Prosecutor's Office, no impartial investigations are known to have been conducted.

After examining the country in May 1999, the UN Committee against torture recommended "that Egypt takes effective measures to prevent torture in police and SSI custody...[and] that a proper registry of detainees, both police and SSI, which is accessible to members of the public be established and maintained."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telex/e-mails/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- seeking assurances that Magdi Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Naggar is being humanely treated while in SSI detention and that he is given regular access to lawyers of his choice and his family;
- urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt
Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt
E-mails: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg
Faxes: + 202 390 1998
Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency General Habib al-'Adeli
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Al-Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
Telegrams: Minister Interior, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 579 2031
E-mails: moi2@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Ms Navla Gabr
The Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 574 9533

Mr Raqa' al-'Arabi
Public Prosecutor, Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali, Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker, The People's Assembly, Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 574 91 75

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 15 September 1999.