

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 135/07 (AMR 51/097/2007, 5 June 2007) Fear of torture/ill-treatment

USA

Sameh Khouzam (m), Egyptian national

Egyptian national Sameh Khouzam, who faces forcible return to Egypt, has received a 12-day stay of deportation. This is due to expire on 18 June, leaving him at risk of torture or ill-treatment if he is then returned to Egypt.

Sameh Khouzam fled Egypt in 1998 after reportedly being tortured and ill-treated by the Egyptian police because of his Coptic Christian religious beliefs. He alleges that he and his family had been subjected to a sustained campaign of intimidation and abuse on account of his refusal to convert to Islam. On one occasion in 1997 he alleges that he was beaten and sexually abused in a police station. The Egyptian authorities have reportedly told the US State Department that he is wanted in Egypt on a murder charge.

Sameh Khouzam was held in US immigration detention until February 2006, when he was released on condition that he report regularly to the immigration authorities. However on 29 May 2007, he was taken into custody again and told that he could be returned to Egypt within days. He is believed to have received a letter from the US Department of Homeland Security stating that it had received diplomatic assurances from the Egyptian authorities that he would not be tortured on his return.

Amnesty International continues to receive well-supported allegations of torture and ill-treatment in Egypt. Some people taken to police stations in connection with minor offences are tortured or ill-treated to force them to confess; others are detained without being accused of anything.

The torture takes various forms. The most frequently reported methods are beatings; electric shocks; suspension by the wrists and ankles and in contorted positions for long periods; and threats that the victim or their relatives will be killed, raped or otherwise sexually assaulted.

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

- welcoming the stay of deportation granted to Egyptian national Sameh Khouzam, but expressing continued concern that he may face torture or ill-treatment if returned to Egypt when the current order expires on 18 June;
- calling on the US authorities to halt his deportation;
- urging them not to rely on diplomatic assurances when deciding whether a person is at risk of torture or ill-treatment if transferred to another country;
- calling on them to reaffirm the absolute nature of the obligation under international law not to transfer any person to a country where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be in danger of being subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20520, USA

Fax: +1 202 261 8577
E-mail: Secretary@state.gov
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security
US Department of Homeland Security
Washington DC 20528, USA

Fax: +1 202 456 2461
Salutation: Dear Secretary Chertoff

COPIES TO:

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20530-0001, USA

Fax: +1 202 307 6777
Email: AskDOJ@usdoj.gov

and to diplomatic representatives of USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 June 2007.