

AI INDEX: EUR 21/02/98

January 1998

FRANCE: THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT BY POLICE OF EGYPTIAN ARCHITECT AHMED HAMED

Amnesty International is concerned about the alleged ill-treatment of Ahmed Hamed by officers of the Anti-Crime Brigade (*Brigade anticriminalité*, BAC). Amnesty International is seeking information from the French authorities regarding the steps being taken to investigate Ahmed Hamed's allegations against the police and their eventual outcome.

Ahmed Hamed is a 41-year-old Egyptian architect and a member of a prominent family from Cairo. On 5 October 1997 he arrived in France accompanied by his parents. They had travelled to France from Egypt so that his mother could receive medical treatment at the American Hospital situated in Neuilly, a north western suburb of Paris.

The following account is based on allegations made by Ahmed Hamed.

Between 9am and 10am on the morning of 16 October 1997, Ahmed Hamed was in a laundrette in the Parisian suburb of Puteaux when he noticed four men enter, closing the door behind them. He was surrounded and forcibly taken outside towards a waiting car. Resisting what he believed to be a kidnapping, Ahmed Hamed alleged that he was violently kicked in the right leg, resulting in a serious fracture of the tibia.

Ahmed Hamed was taken to Puteaux police station where he was detained for questioning. It appeared that the four men, all plain clothes police officers attached to Puteaux police station, had arrested the architect in the belief that he was a thief who had been evading the authorities for several months; in the preceding months two eye-witnesses had reportedly given a description of the thief which fitted that of Ahmed Hamed.

Despite his protests, Ahmed Hamed was interviewed on several occasions and was allegedly threatened with violence if he refused to cooperate. It is further alleged that he was not allowed to contact a lawyer and that a request that he be examined by a doctor was only made by a police officer some 10 hours after his detention.

At approximately 9pm, not having been offered anything to eat or drink, Ahmed Hamed was allowed to leave the police station. No charges were brought against him. He was immediately admitted to Foch Hospital where, on 17 October 1997, he underwent surgery to repair the fracture to his leg. Barring complications, the fracture was expected to take six months to heal. Medical certificates issued by the hospital also noted a bruise to his left eye.

On 20 October 1997 the Egyptian Ambassador in Paris wrote a letter of complaint to the French Minister of the Interior expressing concern about the treatment by the police of Ahmed Hamed, as an Egyptian citizen and requesting an official inquiry. The ambassador also enclosed a more detailed letter of complaint, dated 17 October 1997, from Ahmed

Hamed's father. A press report¹ indicated that on 22 October 1997 the Minister of the Interior had ordered an administrative inquiry, to be carried out by the General Inspectorate of Services². It is not known at this stage whether a judicial inquiry has been opened.

Ahmed Hamed is currently convalescing at home in Cairo.

¹*Libération*, 22-23 November 1997.

²*Inspection générale des services*, IGS. The IGS is responsible for carrying out internal inquiries into complaints against police attached to the Paris Prefecture.