

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture

18 December 1990

EGYPT : Mustafa Mohammad Said al-Sharqawi  
Mohammad Hussein Mohammad Ibrahim Sallam  
Hassan Mohammad Isma'il Mohammad

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that the three men named above are being subjected to torture. All three appear to be prisoners of conscience, detained because they are Muslims who have converted to Christianity. Mustafa Mohammad Said al-Sharqawi and Mohammad Hussein Mohammad Ibrahim Sallam were arrested at the end of September 1990 and Hassan Mohammad Isma'il Mohammad in October. Mustafa Mohammad Said al-Sharqawi is being held at Abu Za'abal Prison, while the other two men are said to be detained at the State Security Intelligence Police (SSIP) detention centre in Heliopolis. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the treatment of detainees held at SSIP centres, where torture is frequently inflicted.

The three men are held under State of Emergency legislation, which permits detainees to be held without charge or trial and to challenge the legality of their detention before a court after 30 days. Although a court ordered their release, the Ministry of Interior appealed against the verdict and they remained in detention until a second court hearing, on 16 December, again ruled that they should be released. Two of the prisoners appeared at the hearing.

Both were said to be in bad physical condition, suffering from hunger and the effects of continuing torture, including electric shocks. Despite the second court release order, against which the Ministry of Interior has no right of appeal, the three prisoners were not released. Instead, the Ministry of Interior issued a new arrest order to keep them in detention: this appears to be an abuse of legal procedures designed to prevent arbitrary detention.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Each year recently Amnesty International has learned of a number of cases where Muslims who have converted to Christianity have been detained, sometimes for months at a time, apparently because of their non-violent expression of their conscientiously-held beliefs. It has also expressed its concern on many occasions about the arbitrary arrest and torture of thousands of political detainees held under State of Emergency legislation and about cases when the Ministry of Interior has flouted the law by keeping prisoners in detention after the courts have ordered their release.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- urging the immediate, unconditional release of the three men, citing their names, if they are held on account of their conscientiously-held religious beliefs and nothing more;
- inquiring about the legal grounds and the reasons for their continuing detention, in particular any charges against them and the evidence on which these are based;

- expressing concern at reports that two of them appeared in court in poor health, evidently bearing signs of torture, and urging that steps be taken immediately to safeguard them from torture;
- urging that they be given immediate and regular access to their families, their lawyers and to all necessary medical treatment;
- urging the authorities to initiate a thorough, impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and to bring to justice any official found to be responsible for torture.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
 General Mohammad Abdel-Halim Moussa  
 Minister of Interior  
 Ministry of Interior  
 Al-Sheikh Riham Street  
 Bab el-Louq  
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Cairo, Egypt  
 Telexes: 21361 MOICM UN  
 Faxes: + 20 2 724 241, Attn: Head of the Legal Department,  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a request to forward to  
 the Minister of Interior

His Excellency  
 Faruq Sayf al-Nasr  
 Minister of Justice  
 Ministry of Justice  
 Midan Lazoughli  
 Nasr City  
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Cairo, Egypt  
 Telexes: 92060 KHARG UN

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency Dr Boutros Boutros Ghali  
 Minister of State for Foreign Affairs  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Maidan al-Tahrir  
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 January 1991.