

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 12/21/97

UA 130/97

Prisoner of conscience

2 May 1997

EGYPT Dr Ahmad al-Ahwany, university professor

Amnesty International is concerned at reports it has received of the arrest on 24 April 1997 of Dr Ahmad al-Ahwany, a professor of Nuclear Energy at Cairo University. He is reportedly accused of planning to distribute documents that would allegedly damage public interests and destabilize public order. However, it is believed that the real reason for his arrest and continuing detention is that he was found to be in possession of a bulletin critical of a new agricultural land law that permits landowners to evict tenants after a grace period. Dr Ahmad al-Ahwany is reportedly being held in Istiqbal Tora Prison under a 15-day detention order, pending the outcome of further investigations.

Amnesty International considers Dr Ahmad al-Ahwany to be a prisoner of conscience being held solely for the non-violent expression of his beliefs, and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Scores of individuals have been arrested in Egypt in recent years and detained for short periods of time, allegedly as a result of their opposition political activities. Others have been sentenced to prison terms and remain detained as prisoners of conscience as a result of such activities, among them 53 alleged members of the *Muslim Brothers* organization sentenced in November 1995 to prison terms of up to five years' imprisonment with hard labour. The charges against them included "membership of a banned organization, plotting to change the present regime through the infiltration of vital institutions with a view to setting up an Islamic state and possession of anti-government literature. However, the real reason for their arrest, detention and subsequent conviction is believed to have been that some of them had been planning to stand as independent candidates in the parliamentary elections in November and December 1995.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the arrest and continuing detention of Dr Ahmad al-Ahwany;
- seeking information regarding his legal status;
- urging his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

2

Faxes: +202 574 9667

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker
The People's Assembly
Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

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 13 June 1997.