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## **Guards accused as scores allegedly shot dead in Egyptian prison**

Egyptian prison guards in watchtowers are feared to have shot dead scores of inmates and a visitor during continuing unrest at a prison near Cairo.

Inmates at the al-Qatta al-Gadeed Prison have given the names of 43 prisoners to Amnesty International who they say have been killed inside the jail.

The body of a male received at a Cairo morgue and identified as “coming from al-Qatta” on Saturday (February 19), may belong to a family member who was shot while visiting an inmate when shooting broke out a week earlier, sources at the morgue and prison said.

A further 81 inmates have been injured since unrest broke out at the prison on January 29, according to lawyers representing the families of prisoners. A security officer is also reported to have died.

“The authorities must stop the use of lethal force against inmates and allow all those injured to receive medical treatment immediately,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa director.

“An independent investigation into the disturbances at the prison must be conducted without delay to establish the circumstances in which prison guards used lethal force,” he added.

The bodies of some inmates from the prison were among 115 corpses from at least four prisons brought to Zenhom morgue in the Egyptian capital, most of which had bullet wounds in the head, neck and chest, said a forensic physician, who wished to remain anonymous.

Several inmates’ relatives who have received bodies have also said the prisoners had suffered bullet wounds to the same areas of the body, suggesting the wounds could have come from sniping attacks.

Inmates had requested to be let free after they heard other prisoners had been released in Egypt after the outbreak of demonstrations across the country which ultimately forced the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak.

But unrest broke out in the prison on January 29 after prison officials rejected their plea.

The civilian and security staff administering the prison under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior left their posts shortly after the unrest began, prisoners and their families told Amnesty International.

Hundreds of prisoners at al-Qatta al-Gadeed are now feared to be at risk from prison guards who are alleged to have shot at and used tear gas against them.

Dozens of injured inmates are receiving basic treatment from fellow prisoners as no professional medical attention is being provided by the authorities, prisoners and their families say.

A pharmacist who is an inmate at the prison, most of whose inmates are reported to be serving prison terms for criminal offences, said: “I’m a pharmacist, not a doctor. But the needs require that I treat the inmates with whatever is available ... I’m applying Betadine (an antiseptic solution that kills bacteria) to torn pieces of underwear to bind prisoners’ wounds because there are no bandages.

“Other inmates suffer from diabetes and need insulin injections, but prison clinic supplies have run out, and others need urgent treatment for liver and kidney complaints. I don’t know what to do for them.”

The last two killings took place on February 11 and 12.

Prisoners and their families also report inmates are being denied adequate food, water and other basic necessities, and say this deprivation was most acute between 29 January, when the unrest began, and 7 February, when soldiers threw bread, jam and cheese over the prison wall.

Note to Editors

For eye witness accounts of shootings by prison guards at al\_Qatta prison, please see:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/020/2011/en>