

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: MDE 12/006/2003 (Public)  
News Service No: 40  
21 February 2003

## **Egypt: Anti-war activists at risk**

One day before further demonstrations against a war in Iraq are scheduled to take place in Egypt, Amnesty International urged the Egyptian authorities to respect people's rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

"We are extremely concerned about the detention of people in connection with their peaceful participation in recent demonstrations in Egypt", the organization said.

Several detainees have been held for days in incommunicado detention without access to their relatives or lawyers:

The family of Magdi Abbas al-Kordi, an activist against a war in Iraq, who was detained around 6 February 2003 did not know his whereabouts for almost a week. They have recently learned that he is held at Mazra'at Tora prison.

On 19 February 2003 Kamal Khalil, a political activist who has been detained on numerous occasions, left his home in Giza and has not been seen since. He is believed to be held in incommunicado detention by the State Security Intelligence (SSI). Some activists have expressed concern that Kamal Khalil has been detained in order to deter others from participating in the forthcoming demonstrations. Amnesty International urges the Egyptian authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Kamal Khalil and to ensure his safety.

More than a dozen demonstrators continue to be held in detention, including several held in administrative detention under emergency legislation. The Egyptian Emergency Law empowers the executive to order prolonged administrative detention without charge or trial of anyone suspected of being 'a threat to national security and public order'.

Some demonstrators have been detained for more than a month under emergency legislation. Muhammad Khalil Ghittas, Muhammad Husni Mahmud, Muhammad al-Dakhli Ahmad, Tamer Hindawi, Abd al-Gawad Mustafa and Mahmud Hassan Muhammad were held for several days at premises of the SSI before a member of parliament was allowed to visit them there. They are now held in prison.

A recently released detainee reported that he was ill-treated while detained by the SSI. Ibrahim al-Sahary, a journalist with al-'Alam al-Yom newspaper, was detained in the early hours of 8 February at his home by SSI officers. He was later transferred to Mazra'at Tora Prison where he was held in administrative detention and in solitary confinement. Before his release on 17 February he was taken

to the SSI headquarters in Cairo where he was reportedly beaten and insulted, because he refused to be blindfolded and handcuffed with his hands to the back. Ibrahim al-Sahary had recently published a book under the title 'Iraq: A new war for hegemony and oil'. He has also participated in a recent demonstration against a war in Iraq.

Amnesty International is concerned that emergency legislation and Law 10 of 1914 (Assembly Law) impose serious restrictions on the rights of freedom of expression and assembly as guaranteed under international human rights law and standards, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Egypt is a state party.

In November 2002 the UN Human Rights Committee, an expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ICCPR, expressed concerns about the semi-permanent state of emergency in Egypt and recommended reviewing its necessity. The state of emergency has been regularly extended since 1981 and its last extension will expire in May 2003. A further extension of the state of emergency requires approval of the Parliament.

#### Public Document

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