

16 November 2000

AI Index MDE 12/036/2000 - News Service Nr. 218

Egypt: Amnesty International condemns assault on one of its staff members

Vincent Del Buono, Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International, today wrote to the Egyptian authorities to express the organization's grave concerns about the assault on Carsten Jurgensen, an Amnesty International's staff member who was on a routine fact-finding mission researching on the organization's human rights concerns in Egypt.

On 14 November, Carsten Jurgensen who works at Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London, visited the polling station of the Khalid Ben al-Walid school in the parliamentary election district of Shubra al-Khaima / Da'irat al-Ula where allegations of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment, had been reported. When trying to enter the area around the polling station, he found that the entire area was blocked by security officers. He clearly identified himself as an Amnesty International delegate to one of the plainclothes state security officers and was allowed access to the area.

Once he gained access to the area, Mr Jurgensen was approached by approximately four plainclothes men asking him to hand over his video camera. When he refused to hand over the camera about seven men in plainclothes, who refused to identify themselves, dragged him off to a side road. He was then pushed to the ground and repeatedly punched and kicked in the head and shoulders. His belongings, including the video camera, were initially seized but were later returned to him with the exception of his mobile phone, video tape and camera film. He asked to talk to a senior officer to report the attack but to no avail.

Given that the area around the Khalid Ben al-Walid school was sealed and that there was a large and visible police presence, Amnesty International fears that the attack against Carsten Jurgensen may have been carried out by security officers or with their complicity.

The ill-treatment of Carsten Jurgensen is part of a wider pattern of harassment and attacks, particularly on journalists covering the elections. A number of civilians including children have reportedly been killed and dozens injured by members of the security forces.

"We urgently call on the Egyptian authorities to conduct a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into these events, including the attack on Carsten Jurgensen, and to bring those responsible to justice," Vincent Del Buono said.

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>