

098/99
AI INDEX: MDE 12/22/99
19 May 1999

PUBLIC STATEMENT
Amnesty International fears increased restrictions
for human rights groups in Egypt

A new law imposing restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, could soon be passed by the Egyptian Parliament, Amnesty International said today.

“If the new law is passed in its present form it will give authorities far-reaching controls over NGOs’ activities which could seriously hinder the work of human rights groups in Egypt,” the organization said.

The Egyptian human rights movement has been actively engaged in dialogue with the authorities about the new law, but it was not consulted over the final version of the law which could be passed by the Egyptian Parliament during the coming week. Over the past year Egyptian human rights organizations have provided the authorities with expertise and advice, but also raised their concerns in the process of discussing the law.

Amnesty International is concerned about a number of restrictive conditions in the new law, including regulations referring to relations on the international level, board elections and dissolving of NGOs. For example, dissolving an NGO can be initiated on the grounds that the NGO joins an organization or association outside Egypt without seeking prior permission by the authorities.

Amnesty International calls on the Egyptian authorities to ensure that any changes should contribute to improve the framework for human rights work and not impose or maintain restrictive conditions.

ENDS.../

