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EGYPT: EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE FAILS TO ALLAY HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENT

The Egyptian government's response to yesterday's report about deaths in custody in that country fails to allay the organizations's fundamental human rights concerns, Amnesty International said today.

"We welcome the government's response, which we received yesterday, and consider it an indication of the Egyptian authorities' commitment to continuing dialogue with Amnesty International," the organization said.

Amnesty International urges the authorities to provide further information on these deaths in custody and to set up prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all cases of deaths in custody and all allegations of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees.

"The truth emerges only when such investigations are carried out and when their methods and findings are made public," Amnesty International said.

The Egyptian government's response questions the veracity of Amnesty International's information, specifically the names of detainees who died in al-Wadi al-Gadid Prison, mentioned in the report. The response gives some information on 14 detainees who died in detention centres, including one in a police station, but does not give detailed information on the circumstances of death, nor does it give any details of the medical care which these men, many of them young, were receiving.

The response states that all Egyptian prisons, including al-Wadi al-Gadid Prison, have adequate medical facilities, and that the Prisons Law guarantees the rights of prisoners and detainees. It also refers to the good living conditions in al-Wadi al-Gadid Prison.

What originally prompted Amnesty International to take action was the marked increase in deaths in custody in recent months and persistent allegations of torture and ill-treatment in prisons. The organization believes that further details on these deaths is vital to clarify matters.

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its human rights concerns in the country with the Egyptian authorities, but no practical steps have been taken to redress the situation. On the contrary the human rights situation continues to deteriorate.

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For further information, please refer to Amnesty International's report:
Egypt: Deaths in Custody (AI Index: MDE 12/18/95), 10 October 1995.