

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Egypt: Government urged to lift state of emergency without further delay**

Amnesty International welcomes the Egyptian government's announcement last week confirming that the nationwide state of emergency in force since 1981 is to be lifted, but is calling for this to be done without further delay.

Six months ago on 12 February, the day after Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) promised to lift the state of emergency in advance of parliamentary elections scheduled in November, yet it still remains in force. On 11 August, the government said that the necessary steps were being taken to lift the emergency, but without naming the date on which it will be revoked or giving other details.

Under Hosni Mubarak, the state of emergency was used to suppress opposition and dissent and became a byword both for abuse of power by the state and for human rights violations by state forces. The security forces, including the notorious and now disbanded State Security Investigations (SSI), were empowered to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions and allowed to torture and otherwise ill-treat detainees with impunity. Thousands of government critics and opponents were detained without charge or trial – in some cases for years at a time – under administrative orders issued by the Ministry of Interior, often despite repeated court orders for the detainees' release. As well, using their state of emergency powers, the authorities were able repeatedly to circumvent the normal justice system and try civilian critics and opponents of the government before emergency and military courts that were neither independent nor fair. In some cases, defendants in these courts were sentenced to death after unfair trials.

Amnesty International, together with many Egyptian human rights defenders, activists and organizations has long called for the immediate lifting of the state of emergency in order both to end the abuses it has facilitated and as a prerequisite for restoring the rule of law in Egypt. It is intolerable that such abusive legislation still remains in force even though the authorities have ceased using some of the powers it provides since Hosni Mubarak was driven from power on 11 February 2011, after 18 days of mass public protests and calls for his removal. Following his overthrow, the new government progressively released all administrative detainees as well as other political prisoners who had been sentenced by emergency or military courts.

Amnesty International urges the Egyptian authorities not to introduce other repressive legislation to replicate powers currently available under the state of emergency when it is lifted, as the Mubarak government planned to do. Further, the Egyptian authorities must also repeal or amend other emergency-like provisions that were inserted into normal statute law under Mubarak and which could still be used to restrict fundamental rights after the state of emergency is lifted.

Amnesty International's report, *Time for Justice: Egypt's Corrosive System of Detention* ([www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/029/2011/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/029/2011/en)), published in April 2011, details its concerns about administrative detention and related abuses under Egypt's state of emergency.