

PUBLIC

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UA 325/04 Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

EGYPT Up to 2,500 people

Up to 2,500 people are in custody after car bomb attacks which killed more than 30 people in the Red Sea tourist resort of Taba on 7 October. Others recently released have alleged that they were tortured. The vast majority of those still in custody are held incommunicado in State Security Intelligence (SSI) centres, including the SSI headquarters in Lazoghly Square, Cairo, where torture is frequently reported.

Three bombs were set off during the attack on the Hilton hotel and two campsites, in and around Taba, which is near the Israeli border, in North Sinai. At least 34 people died, and over 120 were injured. The mass arrests that followed took place mainly in the nearby cities of Arish and Sheikh Zoayyed, during the last two weeks of October. On 24 November local human rights groups quoted a senior official in charge of security in the Sinai region as estimating the number of those still detained at 2,500. He also said that 320 had been released on 12 November, the eve of *Eid al-Fitr*, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Many of those released said that they had been tortured by SSI officers. They said they had been beaten, suspended by the wrists or ankles and given electric shocks.

Police and SSI are reported to have used excessive force during the raids in Arish and Sheikh Zoayyed, threatening and assaulting many people, including women, and breaking into houses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is common in Egypt. It is practiced systematically in SSI branches, police stations and occasionally in prisons. The most common methods of torture reported are: electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles, burning with cigarettes, and various forms of psychological torture, including death threats and threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or their female relatives.

The UN Committee against Torture expressed concern at the "persistence of the phenomenon of torture and ill-treatment of detainees by law enforcement officials" and "the widespread evidence of torture and ill-treatment ... [by] the State Security Investigation Department" in its 2002 conclusions and recommendations to the Egyptian authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to guarantee that those still in custody will not be tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the detainees have access to their relatives and lawyers as well as any medical attention they may require;
- asking that those still in custody be released immediately, or else charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial;
- expressing concern that many of those released have reported being tortured or ill-treated;
- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and ill-treatment, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 390 1998
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency General Habib al-Adeli
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Al-Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: moi@idsc.gov.eg
Fax: + 202 579 2031
Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mahmoud Abu El Lail Rashed
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Midan Lazoghly, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: mojeb@idsc.gov.eg
Fax: + 202 795 8103
Salutation: Dear Minister

Counsellor Maher 'Abd al-Wahid
Public Prosecutor
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 577 4716
Salutation: Dear Public Prosecutor

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 January 2005.