

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 05/95 Death penalty

11 January 1995

EGYPT **Mohammad Nagui Mohammad Mustapha**
 Mohammad Khadir Abu al-Farag al-Mahlawi

On 10 January 1995, the two people named above were sentenced to death by the Supreme Military Court in Cairo, which pronounced judgment in the case of the attempted assassination of the prominent novelist Naguib Mahfouz on 14 October 1994. The two could be executed within weeks if their sentences are upheld.

Sixteen defendants were tried in this case. The two men named above were sentenced to death, two others received life sentences, nine were sentenced to between three and 15 years' imprisonment and the remaining three were acquitted. The charges against them include attempting to assassinate the 82-year-old writer Naguib Mahfouz who suffered a knife wound in his neck and was hospitalized for seven weeks, membership of a banned Islamist group known as al-Gama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group) and possession of weapons and ammunition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past two and a half years, politically motivated acts of violence by armed opposition groups have escalated sharply in Egypt. Islamist militant groups have committed deliberate and arbitrary killings, which Amnesty International has condemned. Victims have included a writer known for his secularist views, Copts, tourists, government officials and police and prison officers.

On 20 September 1994, Amnesty International issued a 24-page report detailing its human rights concerns in Egypt, including the high number of executions following unfair trials by military courts (see Human Rights Defenders Under Threat, AI Index MDE 12/15/94)). Sixty-one death sentences have been passed by military courts since December 1992 and 42 executions have now taken place.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters either in Arabic, English, French or in your own language:

- expressing concern that Mohammad Nagui Mohammad Mustapha and Mohammad Khadir Abu al-Farag al-Mahlawi have been sentenced to death and urging that the President use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, and explaining Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the most extreme form of cruel and inhuman punishment;
- drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, to which Egypt is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker
The People's Assembly
Magles al-Shaab Street, Cairo, Egypt

and 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 8 February 1995.