

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 508/90 (MDE 12/13/90, 18 December 1990, and follow-ups MDE 12/02/91, 30 January 1991, MDE 12/09/91, 15 February 1991) - Fear of Torture

EGYPT:           Mustafa Mohammad Said al-Sharqawi  
                  Mohammad Hussein Mohammad Ibrahim Sallam  
                  Hassan Mohammad Isma'il Mohammad

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At a hearing on 27 March 1991, the court extended the detention of the three prisoners named above by a further 45 days. It seems that at the end of that period they will either have to be tried or released. Mustafa Mohammad Said al-Sharqawi and Mohammad Hussein Mohammad Ibrahim Sallam were arrested at the end of September 1990 and Hassan Mohammad Isma'il Mohammad in October. Reports indicate that they may be charged under Article 98(f) of the penal code, concerning the exploitation of religion, propagation of extremist religious thought and putting national unity and social peace at risk. All three had apparently converted from Islam to Christianity.

They are still held in Abu Za'abal Prison and they are now reportedly all receiving family visits.

Letters have been received from Egyptian government authorities and diplomatic representatives in response to the earlier Urgent Action.

In its response to Amnesty International, the Government of Egypt states that these three men *are being held to protect social peace and national unity*, claiming that they had held meetings, where they had compared Islam to Christianity in a way that could lead to sectarian strife. It says *the Egyptian constitution guarantees the freedom of belief and exercise of religion*, however, *the penal code prohibits the exploitation of religion in any way which aims to damage public unity*. The Government also states that the allegations of torture are unfounded.

Amnesty International believes that these three men have merely exercised their right to freedom of religion and speech, without using or advocating violence. These rights are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Egypt is a state party. The organization believes that they are therefore prisoners of conscience and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/ express and airmail letters:**

- urging the immediate, unconditional release of these three prisoners who appear to be held solely for the non-violent expression of their beliefs;
- urging the authorities to initiate a thorough, impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and to bring to justice any official found to be responsible for torture.

**APPEALS TO:**

General Mohammed Abdel-Halim Moussa

Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Al Sheikh Rihan Street  
Bab Al Louq  
Cairo  
Arab Republic of Egypt  
**Telegrams: Minister Interior, Cairo, Egypt**  
**Telexes: 21361 MOICM UN**  
**Faxes: + 20 2 355 7792**

His Excellency Faruq Sayf al-Nasr  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Midan Lazoghli  
Cairo  
Arab Republic of Egypt  
**Telegrams: Minister Justice, Cairo, Egypt**  
**Telexes: 20267 MJUST UN**  
**Faxes: + 20 2 355 8103**

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency Dr Ahmad 'Esmat 'Abd al-Maguid  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Midan At-Tahrir  
Cairo  
Arab Republic of Egypt

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 May 1991.