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Torture or ill-treatment/
Incommunicado detention

17 October 2002

EGYPT

Al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani (m), aged 50

Al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani was arrested on 1 October at Cairo airport. He is being held incommunicado at an unknown location. Amnesty International fears that he is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani, a fisherman, was returning from Greece, where he lives, when he was arrested. Reports suggest he was then detained within the airport for two days. During this time, he was allegedly able to make a brief telephone call. He called his relatives, and informed them that he would be taken to the headquarters of the State Security Investigations (SSI) Department in Lazoghly, Cairo. It is not known whether he is being held there, and there is no official confirmation of who is holding him.

Al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani is the uncle of a UK-based Islamist activist, Yassir al-Sirri, the head of the Islamic Observatory Center for Human Rights. In 1994 Yassir al-Sirri was sentenced *in absentia* to death for his alleged membership in an armed Islamist group by the Supreme Military Court in Cairo.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture or ill-treatment of political detainees is common in Egypt, in SSI branches, police stations and occasionally in prisons. Relatives of political prisoners have been victims of human rights violations, including detention without charge or trial, solely because of their family relationship.

On 7 August 2002 Yassir al-Sirri’s two brothers, Yahya Tawfiq ‘Ali al-Sirri, a football trainer, and Muhammad Tawfiq ‘Ali al-Sirri, an engineer, were arrested from their homes in Egypt’s Suez region. They reportedly remain in administrative detention, held without charge or trial. Both were held for several weeks at premises of the SSI in Lazoghly, where they were at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Both are currently detained under emergency legislation Istiqbal Tora Prison in Cairo.

Several thousand political detainees remain in administrative detention under Article 3 of the Emergency Law despite having been issued release orders by the courts. Administrative detention is ordered by the executive branch of a government without a judicial warrant and without the filing of any criminal charges. Anyone held in administrative detention under Article 3 has certain rights of appeal, but these are complex and open to abuse.

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

- expressing concern that al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani, arrested on 1 October, is in incommunicado detention;
- urging the authorities to reveal where he is held, and give him access to his lawyer, relatives and any medical attention he may require;
- calling on the authorities to provide a guarantee that al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- reminding the government of the absolute prohibition on torture in customary international law and of their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";- calling for al-Sayid Muhammad Hassan ‘Abd al-Ghani to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or immediately released;
- calling for an end to the use of administrative detention under Article 3 of the Emergency Law.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telegram: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg

Fax: + 202 390 1998

Telex: 93794 WAZRA UN

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

Telegram: Minister of Interior, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: moi@idsc.gov.eg

Fax: + 202 579 2031

Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mr Faruq Sayf al-Nasr
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Midan Lazoghly, Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: moheb@idsc.gov.eg

Fax: + 202 795 8103

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Public Prosecutor

Counsellor Maher 'Abd al-Wahid

Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali

Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 577 4716

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 28 November 2002.