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EGYPT

The “disappearance” of Mansur Kikhiya: the truth must be revealed

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On 28 September 1997 the *Washington Post* published an article about the fate and circumstances surrounding the “disappearance” in December 1993 of Mansur Kikhiya, a prominent Libyan human rights activist and former Minister of Foreign Affairs. The article, citing US officials, stated that the “Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] has developed convincing evidence that Egyptian agents staged the 1993 abduction in Cairo of a prominent Libyan dissident and US resident, who was then turned over to the Libyan regime...”. The article added that “following a four-year investigation, the CIA told the Clinton administration this summer that it had confirmed for the first time the dissident, Mansur Kikhiya, was taken to Libya and executed...”.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned at these latest reports and has written once again to the Egyptian Government urging that a thorough, independent and impartial inquiry be carried out into Mansur Kikhiya's "disappearance", in accordance with Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The organization has also urged that should these new allegations be found to have any basis, any members of the Egyptian security forces implicated be brought to justice.

Amnesty International is also calling on the US State Department to make public the new evidence which the CIA claims to have developed. US officials have so far not given any details as to the outcome of the CIA investigation. Even when they sent a letter to Mansur Kikhiya's wife, Baha' al-'Umri who is a US citizen, at the end of August 1997 to give her the news, they did not give her any details about the new evidence. They reportedly asked her to announce the content of the letter at a press conference, but she declined. Amnesty International believes that any new evidence regarding the "disappearance" of Mansur Kikhiya, no matter how painful it is, must be published.

Background:

Mansur Kikhiya, aged 56, served as Libya's Foreign Minister between 1972 and 1974. In 1975 he was appointed Libya's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, a post he held until September 1980 when he resigned in protest against the execution of Libyan opposition activists by the Libyan Government that year. He is married with two grown-up children. He was in Cairo attending the general conference of the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), of which he was a board member. He was last seen on the evening of 10 December 1993 at the *al-Safir* Hotel in Cairo.

Following his "disappearance", the Egyptian Government stated that it had launched an investigation. Since December 1993 Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the Egyptian, as well as the Libyan, authorities to shed light on the fate and whereabouts of Mansur Kikhiya. Over the last two years Amnesty International delegates visiting Egypt were told by the head of the Human Rights Unit within the Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as by the head of the Human Rights Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the investigation into the "disappearance" of Mansur Kikhiya had been completed, and that Egypt had nothing to do with his "disappearance". On 13 August 1996 the Government also replied to an enquiry about Mansur Kikhiya from the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances stating that it had made every effort to shed light on his "disappearance" but had been unable to solve the mystery surrounding his fate. Following the publication of the *Washington Post* article and comments made by US officials, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, 'Amre Moussa, was quoted in the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat* of 2 October 1997 saying that "the Government of Egypt and its official institutions have nothing to do" with Mansur Kikhiya's "disappearance".

However, to date the findings, as well as the methods of the Egyptian Government's investigation of Mansur Kikhiya's "disappearance" have never been made public. Information provided by the AOHR and lawyers acting on behalf of Baha' al-'Umri, casts doubt about the seriousness of the investigation. They stated that the last person to have seen Mansur Kikhiya before his "disappearance" was Youssef Salih Najm, a Libyan businessman, who travelled to Libya on 12 December 1993. He visited Cairo again between 24 January and 4 February 1994 but was never questioned in connection with Mansur Kikhiya's "disappearance". According to the AOHR and the lawyers, on 13 January 1994 the Public Prosecutor's Office requested the State Security Investigations Department (SSI) to summon Youssef Salih Najm for questioning, but the SSI failed to do so when he arrived in Cairo at the end of January 1994.

Mansur Kikhiya was not the first Libyan to have "disappeared" in Egypt. Two prominent Libyan opposition activists, Jaballah Matar and 'Izzat Youssef al-Maqrif, had "disappeared" in Cairo in March 1990 and their whereabouts since that time have remained unknown, even though unconfirmed reports have suggested that they were both handed over to the Libyan authorities immediately following their reported arrests by officers from the SSI, and that they are detained without charge or trial in Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli. Egypt and Libya have also forcibly returned opposition activists sought by each country. For example on 29 September 1992 at least 18 Libyan Islamist opposition activists were arrested in Egypt and handed over to the Libyan authorities. Most of them are still held without charge or trial.

Amnesty International campaigns against "disappearances" in all cases. The organization has repeatedly drawn the Egyptian and Libyan authorities' attention to the fact that "disappearances" are not only acts of extreme cruelty; but they also violate international standards on human rights. Article 2 (1) of the UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance states that "No state shall practise, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances". Article 13 of the Declaration calls for investigations to be carried out "as long as the fate of the victim of enforced disappearance remains unclarified".