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Egypt: No access to prisons for Amnesty International delegates

An Amnesty International delegation has just returned from a fact-finding mission in Egypt, during which it was denied access to prisoners and detainees.

"We regret that the Egyptian authorities did not permit us to conduct interviews with several men and women held in Egyptian prisons," Amnesty International said today.

The delegates met with civil society activists, victims of human rights violations and their relatives, as well as Egyptian officials.

A list of men and women, including prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience, whom the organization had planned to meet, was submitted to the Egyptian authorities over one month prior to travel. However, permission to visit any of those mentioned on the list was denied by the authorities. The list included:

human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, sentenced on appeal to seven years' imprisonment on 29 July 2002 by the Supreme State Security Court, on charges of accepting foreign funds without authorization, disseminating false information harmful to Egypt's interest, and embezzlement;

three British citizens, Maajid Nawaz, Ian Malcolm Nisbett, and Reza Pankhurst, who were arrested on 1 April 2002. Their trial, before the (Emergency) Supreme State Security Court, is scheduled to begin on 20 October 2002 in connection with their alleged affiliation with the banned *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* (Islamic Liberation Party). The three men as well as Egyptian nationals who were detained in the same case were reportedly subjected to torture or ill-treatment in the initial period of their detention;

Sa'd Zaghlul al-'Ashmawi Muhammad Sabir al-'Ashmawi, Muhammad Badi'a 'Abd al-Magid, and Ahmad Ibrahim Ahmad al-Halawani, sentenced to five years' imprisonment in November 2000, for their alleged affiliation with the banned Muslim Brotherhood.

Manal Wahid Mana'i, mother of five, who was sentenced in September 2000 by an exceptional court - established under emergency laws - to five years' imprisonment under charges of contempt of religion. She was accused of being the leader of a religious group, which allegedly attributes divine status to a late Sufi Sheikh.

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