

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture

26 January 1999

EGYPT Ahmad Hassan Badi'a, accountant
Ala' Hassan Badi'a]brothers of Ahmad Hassan Badi'a
Yassir Hassan Badi'a]
Magdi Fahmi
Muhammad Farag, an imam (prayer leader)

and 12 others

Amnesty International fears for the safety of the five above-named men and 12 others who are detained incommunicado by the State Security Investigation Department (SSI), which routinely uses torture.

On 11 January 1999, Ahmad Hassan Badi'a, Magdi Fahmi, Muhammad Farag and 12 other Egyptian men were arrested in Kuwait and forcibly returned to Egypt. According to news reports the Kuwaiti authorities have accused them of "subversive acts to destabilize the security and stability of Kuwait". They are currently held at the SSI in Lazoghly Square, Cairo.

On around 15 January, 'Ala' Hassan Badi'a and Yassir Hassan Badi'a, brothers of Ahmad Hassan Badi'a, were also detained and are now believed to be held at the SSI headquarters in Zaqaziq, Sharquiya province, in the northeast of the country.

Ahmad Hassan Badi'a, Magdi Fahmi (married to a Kuwaiti citizen), and Muhammad Farag had been living in Kuwait for several years, where their wives and children remain. 'Ala' Hassan Badi'a and Yassir Hassan Badi'a are both married with children.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture of political prisoners in Egypt is common, particularly at the SSI headquarters in Lazoghly Square, but also other SSI branches, at police stations and occasionally prisons. The most common methods reported are: electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles, burning with cigarettes, and various forms of psychological torture, including death threats and threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or their female relatives. Despite hundreds of complaints of torture reported by lawyers and local human rights groups to the Public Prosecutor's Office, no impartial investigations are known to have been conducted.

In May 1996, the United Nations Committee against Torture issued a report summarizing the results of a confidential inquiry carried out between 1991 and 1996. It concluded that "torture is systematically practised by the Security Forces in Egypt, in particular by State Security Intelligence" and went on to urge the government to "make particular efforts to prevent its security forces from acting as a State within a State, for they seem to escape control by superior authorities". In addition, the Committee recommended the need for the government to "set up an independent investigation machinery, including in its composition judges, lawyers and medical doctors, that should efficiently examine all the allegations of torture, in order to bring them expeditiously before the courts. This independent group should also monitor the safeguards against torture guaranteed to persons deprived of their liberty under Egyptian law, in particular by having access to all the places where allegations of torture have been reported...."

The Egyptian Government has so far failed to implement any of the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/E-mails/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- seeking assurances that the 17 people named above are being humanely treated while in SSI detention and that they are given regular access to lawyers of their choice and their families;
- urging that the authorities charge them with a recognizably criminal offence or release them immediately and unconditionally;
- reminding the government of Egypt of its 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".

APPEALS TO:

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

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt
e-mails: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg
Faxes: + 202 390 1998
Telexes: 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

Telegrams: Minister Interior, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 579 2031
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 574 9533

Mr Raga' al-'Arabi
Public Prosecutor, Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali, Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker, The People's Assembly, Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 574 91 75

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 23 February 1999.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"

Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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