

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 12/49/98

UA 284/98

Forcible return /Fear of Torture

2 November 1998

EGYPT Mohammad 'Abeid 'Abd al-'Aal

Mohammad 'Abeid 'Abd al-'Aal was forcibly returned to Egypt by the Ecuadorean authorities at the end of last week. He is said to be held incommunicado in the headquarters of the State Security Investigation Department (SSI) in Lazoghly Square (Cairo). Amnesty International fears he may be subjected to torture.

Mohammad 'Abeid 'Abd al-'Aal, an alleged member of the armed group *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* (Islamic Group), left Egypt in 1986. The Egyptian authorities wanted to question him about his activities outside Egypt and the Luxor massacre in November 1997, in which 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians were killed by members of *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya*.

Mohammad 'Abeid 'Abd al-'Aal was arrested in Colombia in mid-October 1998. The Colombian authorities deported him to Ecuador on 21 October, on the grounds that he had entered Colombia from Ecuador. On 31 October, President Hosni Mubarak announced that Mohammad 'Abeid 'Abd al-'Aal had been returned to Egypt, after the Egyptian authorities had asked the Ecuadorean authorities for his extradition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture of political prisoners in Egypt continues to be systematic, particularly in the headquarters of the SSI in Lazoghly Square, but also in other SSI branches in the country, police stations and occasionally prisons. The most common torture 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. Lawyers and local human rights groups have lodged hundreds of complaints of torture with the Public Prosecutor's Office, but 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 since 1991 over a period of five years. It concluded that: "*torture is systematically practised by the Security Forces in Egypt, in particular by State Security Intelligence*".

The Committee urged the Egyptian 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*". The Egyptian Government has so far failed to implement any of the recommendations made by the Committee.

Among those recommendations were the need 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....*"

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

- seeking assurances that Mohammad 'Abid 'Abd al-'Aal is being humanely treated and that he is given regular access to a lawyer of his own choice and to his family;

- 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

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Faxes: + 202 390 1998

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

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

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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 14 December 1998.

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

Article 5 , Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>