

AI Index: PRE 01/044/2011
04 February 2011

Egypt: Release Detained Activists, Journalists

The Egyptian authorities should immediately reveal the whereabouts of Egyptian and international human rights activists, lawyers and journalists arrested during a raid on the Hisham Mubarak Law Center in Cairo on the afternoon of February 3, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said today.

The two organizations demanded the immediate release of all those detained including their staff. In a separate incident yesterday afternoon, three members of the Egyptian Centre for Housing Rights were also arrested and taken from the building and now remain missing.

Among more than 30 arrested, those detained include; Daniel Williams, a Human Rights Watch researcher; Said Haddadi, an Amnesty International researcher and a female colleague; Ahmed Seif Al Islam, the former director of the Hisham Mubarak Law Center; a French and a Portuguese journalist; and at least nine other lawyers associated with the Hisham Mubarak Law Center or volunteers from the Front to Defend Egypt's Protesters.

Eye-witnesses outside the building where the detainees were arrested said they were taken away with a military escort.

Local colleagues of the arrested Egyptian lawyers believe that the group is being detained by the military police at Camp 75, a military camp located in Manshiyet el-Bakri, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Cairo. When lawyers went to Camp 75 and requested access to their detained colleagues, the army officials refused to confirm that they had any of the missing in detention.

The Egyptian authorities have also not provided foreign embassies with any information about where the detainees are being kept, or provided a reason for their arrest.

“At a time when serious human rights abuses are taking place in Egypt, the raid on the offices of the Hisham Mubarak Center and detention our colleagues is deeply disturbing,” said Ken Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch. “But it is totally unacceptable that they have given us no information about their whereabouts. The authorities must urgently clarify where they are holding our researcher and other colleagues and they should release all of them now.”

“Holding human rights activists is completely unacceptable and is indicative of an increasing clampdown on freedom of expression in Egypt.” said Salil Shetty, Secretary-General of Amnesty International. “We hold the Egyptian authorities responsible for the safety of all those in detention including our staff and call for their safe and immediate release.”

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