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## **Egypt: Investigate security forces crimes now**

Members of the security forces that have for decades brutally repressed Egyptians must be held to account, Amnesty International said today as it released a damning report into the use of emergency powers under former President Hosni Mubarak.

In *Time for Justice: Egypt's Corrosive System of Detention*, Amnesty International calls for the immediate establishment of an independent inquiry into human rights abuses committed by the much-feared State Security Investigations Service (SSI).

"Under the cover of the state of emergency, President Mubarak's state security forces were for years allowed to commit gross violations without fear of scrutiny or punishment," said Amnesty International.

"This is a moment for fundamental change," said Amnesty International. "It demands immediate concrete steps from the authorities so that those responsible for serious human rights violations are held to account."

"Egyptians must see justice done for the human rights abuses of the past."

The organization said it was prepared to make its archive of human rights reports available to the Egyptian authorities to assist with an investigation.

On 15 March, following mass protests, the Interior Ministry announced that the SSI had been abolished, and that a new national security body would be established in its place.

But no details have been given as to what will happen to SSI officers, whether any will be subject to investigation and whether any vetting system was put in place for their integration in the police force.

Amnesty International also called for the 30-year-old state of emergency to be ended immediately, and said that all provisions of the Emergency Law must be repealed.

In recent weeks, Amnesty International has documented the continuing use of torture, arbitrary detention, trials of civilians before military courts and repression of freedom of expression by authorities.

After the army violently cleared Tahrir Square of demonstrators on 9 March, women protesters told Amnesty International that they were beaten, given electric shocks, subjected to strip searches, then forced to submit to 'virginity checks' and threatened with prostitution charges.

"The uniforms may have changed but we have seen the same patterns of abuse continue," said Amnesty International. "Accountability for past crimes is essential to send out a clear message that violations will no longer be tolerated."

SSI officers used administrative detention to hold people who were critical of the Egyptian authorities, human rights activists and criminal suspects for as long as they wanted and without intent to prosecute them in a criminal trial.

The authorities have never disclosed how many people were held in administrative detention. National and international human rights organizations estimated the number in the last years of Mubarak's rule to be between 6,000 and 10,000.

In the hundreds of cases that Amnesty International has examined, detainees were never informed of the reason for their arrest, many were not allowed to contact the outside world or have legal assistance, and some disappeared for months.

Torture of detainees was routine, including electric shocks, beatings, suspension, whipping and sleep deprivation.

52-year-old Mohamed Abu Essaoud Ismail was one of many people held for up to 20 years.

He was arrested in 1991 for alleged membership of Gamaa al-Islamiya, at that time an armed Islamist group. His family knew nothing of what had happened to him until 1998.

He was only released in February this year after the fall of President Mubarak. He had been tortured and denied adequate medical care for long-term health problems.

In May 2010 the Egyptian authorities said that administrative detention would only be used to prevent terrorism or drug-related crime and limited the application of the Emergency Law accordingly. In fact they have persistently used emergency powers to stifle freedom of expression and assembly and to repress peaceful political opposition.

Human rights activist Musaad Abu Fagr was released in July 2010 after two and a half years in administrative detention despite 21 court orders for his release.

Following the fall of President Mubarak, a newly-installed Interior Minister announced on 12 March 2011 that 1,659 administrative detainees had been released since early February. But it is unknown how many people remain in detention.

Amnesty International called for victims of human rights violations to receive reparations, including financial compensation and guarantees that there will be fundamental reform.

“The authorities cannot expect to simply sweep the past under the carpet without addressing the needs of the victims of years of ruthless repression,” said Amnesty International.

“They have an obligation to tell their victims why they were victimised and who was responsible for their ordeal.”

### **Read more**

- Time for Justice: Egypt's Corrosive System of Detention
- Testimonies of victims of administrative detention
- Amnesty International's recommendations in full
- Egypt: Human Rights Agenda for Change, published 10 February

### **Background**

This report is largely based on three fact-finding trips to Egypt by Amnesty International delegates in January/February 2009, February/March 2010 and November/December 2010. An Amnesty International delegation was also in Egypt between January and March 2011. It draws on discussions with lawyers, human rights activists, academics and journalists who report on abuses of administrative detainees as well as the interviews with relatives of detainees and former detainees.

The Emergency Law gives security forces sweeping powers, suspended some constitutional rights, allowed the creation of exceptional courts, circumscribed oppositional political activity, restricted demonstrations, hemmed in civil society organizations, and legalized censorship. Administrative detention is governed by Article 3(1), which gives the President or his deputies the power to arrest and detain any person the authorities deem to be “dangerous to public security and order”.

**READ THE FULL REPORT** <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/029/2011/en>

**READ THE REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/032/2011/en>

**READ THE STORIES OF FORMER DETAINEES WHO ARE AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS** <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/031/2011/en>