

URGENT ACTION

TORTURE FEARS FOR TWO PAKISTANI STUDENTS

Brothers Abdullah and Ibrahim Mohamed El-Sharkawi have not been seen since their alleged enforced disappearance in Pakistan on 25 and 29 May. There are fears that they are being held by Pakistani intelligence agencies and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Abdullah Mohamed El-Sharkawi, 22, is an engineering university student in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. On 25 May, at 6pm, he left the hostel where he lives to go to a shop and has been missing since. While giving a press conference on his disappearance on 27 May, their mother reportedly received a call from Abdullah's younger brother Ibrahim in Attock, in the northern Punjab province, telling her that men in police uniforms who said they were from "the special branch police" were in the house questioning Ibrahim and his siblings.

Ibrahim Mohamed El-Sharkawi, 17, then disappeared on 29 May after leaving the family house in Attock in the morning to buy groceries from the nearby shop. Ibrahim was a student at a public school in Attock. After Ibrahim did not come home, one of his brothers went to look for him at the shop. The shopkeeper claimed to have witnessed the incident and said that he saw around seven people in civilian clothes come out of two cars, follow Ibrahim, and forcefully take him with them. He said that he had seen the cars parked by the family house over night.

The relatives of both brothers said that they are only students and were not affiliated with any political movements. They fear that both brothers were taken by members of the Pakistani intelligence agencies. The family believes that Abdullah and Ibrahim are victims of enforced disappearance and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment given the previous detention, torture and extradition to Egypt of their father Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi in 1995 and their older brother Abdel Rahman Mohamed El-Sharkawi in 2006. Also, the family lacks proper legal papers, making them more vulnerable to abuse such as arbitrary arrest and disappearance. Part of the family is of Egyptian origin and the rest were born in Pakistan, however, they are all struggling to obtain their Pakistani citizenship cards.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY Urdu, English or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Abdullah and Ibrahim Mohamed El-Sharkawi, a minor, are feared to have been arbitrarily arrested and held in secret detention since 25 and 29 May in circumstances that amount to being subjected to enforced disappearance;
- Urging the Pakistani authorities to immediately investigate and disclose the whereabouts of Ibrahim and Abdullah Mohamed Sharkawi, to ensure that both brothers have access to family, legal assistance of choice and any medical care they might require and to ensure that they are protected from torture or other ill-treatment;
- Insisting the authorities release them immediately if they are held in their custody, unless they are transferred to an official place of detention and promptly charged with an internationally recognizable offence and remanded by an independent court, and in the case of Ibrahim Mohamed El-Sharkawi taking into account the needs of persons of his age and treating him according to standards enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Calling on the authorities to investigate and held into account those responsible for their enforced disappearance:

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 JULY 2011 TO:

Prime Minister

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani
Pakistan Secretariat
Constitution Avenue
Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 51 9213780; +92 51
9221596

Email: secretary@cabinet.gov.pk

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Advisor / Minister for Interior

Rehman Malik
Room 404, 4th Floor, R Block,
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 51 9202624

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Following the disappearance of Abdullah and Ibrahim Mohamed El-Sharkawi, the family contacted a Pakistani NGO Defence of Human Rights and through them contacted various government officials inquiring into the alleged abductions of both brothers. They have filed missing person reports in police stations respectively in Islamabad and in Attock.

Since Pakistan became a key ally in the US-led “war on terror” in late 2001, hundreds, if not thousands of people, both Pakistani and foreign nationals have been subjected to enforced disappearances in Pakistan, and some were unlawfully detained in the Pakistani intelligence custody and subjected to “rendition” – they were unlawfully transferred to third countries where they were at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Abdullah and Ibrahim’s father, Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi, and their older brother Abdel Rahman Mohamed El-Sharkawi were also previously victims of arbitrary detention and alleged torture by the Pakistan intelligence and security agencies. They were extradited to Egypt where they were allegedly further tortured.

Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi lived in Egypt until 1988. While in Saudi Arabia for the Muslim pilgrimage, al-Hadj, he learned that Egyptian State Security Intelligence officers were at his home in Cairo waiting to arrest him. He decided not to return to Egypt, and went instead to Pakistan, where he married a Pakistani woman and had three more sons with her (Ibrahim was one of them). In 1989, his Egyptian wife and children joined him there and three years later he was granted Pakistani citizenship. In Pakistan he worked for the Kuwaiti Red Crescent and for an NGO active in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Organization. As an electronic engineer he was responsible for the organization’s electronics department. He later established his own electronics shop in Hayatabad in Pakistan.

Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi was arrested by Pakistani security forces in July or August 1994 along with a number of other men. In November 1994, Pakistan’s Advocate General ruled that he had committed no crime in Pakistan but that he should be kept in custody as he was being sought by the Egyptian government. In December 1994, the Egyptian authorities requested that he and five other Egyptian men should be extradited and charged them with terrorism-related offences. He mounted a legal challenge, asserting that as a Pakistani citizen he could not be extradited to Egypt, but before any court could rule on the matter he was extradited to Egypt by the Pakistani authorities on 26 May 1995. He was detained on arrival in Egypt, held incommunicado and allegedly tortured. He was then served with an administrative detention order, having been acquitted by an emergency court in Egypt. He remained held despite a number of court orders ordering his release until he was finally released on 17 March 2011. Amnesty International campaigned for Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi since 2007 until his recent release.

His son, Abdel Rahman Mohamed El-Sharkawi, Abdullah and Ibrahim’s older brother, was also arrested by the Pakistani intelligence agencies in 2004. He remained in their custody for 14 months during which time he was allegedly severely tortured including being hung by the wrists, beaten unconscious, electrocuted, and receiving threats against his family. He was extradited to Egypt in 2006 where he was further detained and tortured by the State Security Intelligence (SSI) until he was finally released in January 2006. He was rearrested again in 2008, detained incommunicado for two weeks and tortured.

Further to the above, another difficulty faced by the family in Pakistan is that although the father Mohamed Abdel Rehim El-Sharkawi was recognized as a Pakistani citizen and one of his wives was Pakistani, the rest of the family were struggling to obtain Pakistani citizenship and faced numerous complications in their daily life. Although the Peshawar High Court ruled in their favour in January 2010 and ordered the relevant authorities to issue the Pakistani identity cards to the family, the family is still waiting for their legal papers.

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