

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Egypt: End stranglehold on Muslim Brotherhood**

Following the arrest of at least 15 members of the Muslim Brotherhood this morning, Amnesty International calls on the Egyptian authorities to stop their crackdown on peaceful political dissent and uphold the rights to freedoms of expression, association and assembly in Egypt. The move comes a week before Egypt's human rights record is to fall under UN scrutiny in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review on 17 February.

At least 15 members of the Muslim Brotherhood are reported to have been arrested in a series of raids across the country by State Security Investigations (SSI) officers this morning, including the group's deputy chairman, Mahmoud Ezzat, and two other senior members, Essam el-Erian and Abdel Rahman Al-Barr. They have yet to be charged and are currently held in several SSI facilities across Cairo. It is understood that they are due to be brought before the State Security prosecution tomorrow morning. Amnesty International considers those arrested to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their peaceful political activities, and calls on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release them.

Those arrested are the latest targets of the Egyptian authorities' crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, which while officially banned in Egypt, remains the country's largest organized political opposition. Its members and supporters hold around a fifth of the seats in the Egyptian parliament as "independent" members. As such, members of the group have become routine targets of the Egyptian security apparatus, which misuses the wide powers granted by the long-running state of emergency to crush dissent. Amnesty International has seen an intensification of the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in the lead up to the elections for parliament's upper house, the Shura Council, in Spring 2010 and lower house, the People's Assembly, in Autumn 2010.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are routinely subjected to arbitrary arrest and many are held under administrative detention orders – effectively detained for months without charge or trial on the order of the Minister of Interior. The pattern of arrests and detentions has not escaped international scrutiny: in 2008 UN experts, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, ruled that the detention of 26 members of the Muslim Brotherhood was arbitrary.

Amnesty International has also documented cases of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, all civilians, being brought to trial before military courts, a practice which violates the right to a fair and public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Such trials were criticized by Martin Scheinin, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, in October 2009. In November 2009, the Supreme Court of Military Appeals confirmed sentences of up to seven years' imprisonment imposed on 18 leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who had been subjected to a grossly unfair trial before a military court in Cairo in April 2008. Amnesty International has been denied

permission to observe the trial of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood before military courts in spite of several attempts.

Amnesty International calls on the Egyptian authorities to uphold their international obligations to safeguard the rights to freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and in particular to end the pervasive practices of administrative detention and trying civilians before military courts. The organization also calls on the UN Human Rights Council, due to scrutinize Egypt's human rights record later this month in the framework of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review, to give attention to the Egyptian authorities' continuing misuse of emergency powers to quash opposition at home.

Public Document

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