

Victims of Torture day – postcard texts

AI Index: ACT 40/003/2003

"They stripped me, put a dirty sock in my mouth and threw cold water over me. I could barely breathe."

Wa'el Tawfiq

Electric shock torture by Egyptian police

In Egypt, anyone taken into custody is at risk of torture. The police have tortured people from all walks of life, including women, children and the elderly. They have tortured political suspects, criminal suspects, and people not accused of anything who have found themselves in the hands of the police.

Wa'el Tawfiq was arrested during the Cairo International Book Fair on 22 January 2002. An active member of the Egyptian People's Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada, Wa'el Tawfiq was taken to the State Security Investigations headquarters at Lazoghly Square, Cairo.

For two days he was subjected to electric shocks and other forms of torture. He was blindfolded, stripped to his underwear and surrounded by four officers who punched and kicked him. Then electric shocks were applied to his right wrist. A dirty sock was placed in his mouth and bottles of freezing water were poured over him.

Wa'el Tawfiq can identify at least one of the officers who tortured him and he filed a detailed complaint. Yet the authorities have taken no steps towards prosecuting those responsible for his torture.

Your Excellency,

Wa'el Tawfiq was tortured in the State Security Investigations headquarters at Lazoghly Square, Cairo, in January 2002. He was subjected to electric shocks and other forms of torture.

This case is part of a continuing widespread phenomenon of torture in the State Security Investigations Departments and police stations in Egypt. I urge you to ensure that independent and impartial investigations are carried out without further delay and to bring those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely,

name:

country:

Counsellor Maher 'Abd al-Wahid

Public Prosecution Office

Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali

Ramses Street

Cairo

EGYPT

“...He had been decapitated and his ears, nose and eyes removed”

a witness describes the dead body of murdered human rights activist Manuel García de la Cruz

Torture used as a tool of terror in Guatemala

Manuel García de la Cruz was tortured and murdered on 6 September 2002. His death was a brutal warning to human rights defenders.

Manuel García de la Cruz was a human rights activist in the indigenous human rights organization CONAVIGUA which works to secure the human rights of Guatemala's indigenous people. He was working alongside women who had lost members of their family during the years of armed conflict in which some 200,000 people, the vast majority indigenous, were killed. He was involved in exhumations of clandestine mass graves and in accompanying widows to court to seek justice on behalf of victims. When his body was recovered, he had been decapitated and his ears, nose and eyes removed.

His murder followed months of threats and harassment directed at human rights groups, including the ransacking of the offices of CONAVIGUA and other organizations in July 2002.

The brutality of Manuel García de la Cruz' mutilation was deliberate. Amnesty International believes that it was intended to intimidate his entire community, to deter them from exposing human rights violations committed in the past and to deter them from seeking justice and redress. His torture and death cannot be allowed to go uninvestigated and unpunished.

Your Excellency,

I write to protest at the torture and murder in September 2002 of Manuel García de la Cruz of Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA). It is imperative that this crime is impartially investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice without further delay. I urge you to ensure that the Guatemalan authorities protect members of CONAVIGUA and other human rights defenders as they carry out their peaceful work.

Yours sincerely,

Sr. Presidente:

Me dirijo a usted para transmitirle mi protesta por la tortura y asesinato, en septiembre de 2002, de Manuel García de la Cruz, perteneciente a la Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA). La investigación imparcial de este crimen es un deber inexcusable, como lo es llevar sin demora ante la justicia a quienes lo perpetraron. Le insto a que garantice que las autoridades guatemaltecas protegen a los miembros de CONAVIGUA y a otros defensores de los derechos humanos en el desempeño de su actividad pacífica.

Atentamente,

name:

country:

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera

Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Presidencia de la República de Guatemala
6a. Avenida "A" 4-41, Zona 1,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

“No, not here...”

an Indonesian military commander tells his men to finish off the captives somewhere less public when their vehicle stops at a military checkpoint

Indonesian human rights activists tortured and killed

Four young human rights volunteers, one of them a woman, and a local villager were seized by armed men in the Indonesian province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. They were beaten before all but one were shot dead.

Ernita binti Wahab, Idris Yusuf, Bakhtiar Usman and Nazaruddin Abdul Gani worked with the organization Rehabilitation Action for Torture Victims in Aceh (RATA). On 6 December 2000 they were stopped by around 14 men in unmarked vehicles.

The four were ordered from their vehicle at gunpoint, beaten with rifle butts, and had shots fired near their feet. They were then driven away. After about three hours they stopped and Ernita binti Wahab and Idris Yusuf were taken out and shot in the head at point-blank range. Nazaruddin Abdul Gani managed to escape. Bakhtiar Usman's body was later found at the scene.

A police investigation led to the arrest of four civilians and four soldiers. However, the four civilians escaped in March 2001 and the four military personnel were released after their detention orders expired. The Indonesian Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) announced in January 2001 that it would investigate the killings, but an investigation team was never established.

Your Excellency,

I write to protest at the torture and extrajudicial execution of Ernita binti Wahab, Bakhtiar Usman and Idris Yusuf in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province in December 2000. To date no one has been brought to justice for the deaths of these members of the Rehabilitation Action for Torture Victims in Aceh (RATA). Progress in this case is a test of your government's commitment to human rights.

Yours sincerely,

Yang Mulia,

Saya menulis surat ini untuk memprotes atas penyiksaan dan hukuman mati di luar jalur hukum yang dijatuhkan kepada Ernita binti Wahab, Bakhtiar Usman dan Idris Yusuf di propinsi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam pada bulan Desember 2000. Sampai hari ini belum ada seorang pun yang diajukan ke pengadilan sehubungan dengan kematian para anggota Aksi Rehabilitasi bagi Korban Penyiksaan di Aceh (RATA) tersebut. Kemajuan penyelidikan dalam kasus ini akan merupakan ujian bagi komitmen pemerintah Anda atas hak asasi manusia.

Hormat kami,

name:

country:

President Megawati Sukarnoputri

President of the Republic of Indonesia

Istana Merdeka

Jakarta 10110

Indonesia

“We are measuring your coffin”

a telephone death threat to Turkish human rights activist Eren Keskin

Human rights defender harassed and threatened in Turkey

Eren Keskin is a lawyer and a human rights activist in Turkey. She has been repeatedly harassed because of her work. She has exposed the torture of women prisoners in Turkey and is one of the founders of a legal aid project for women survivors of sexual assault in custody. Harassment against her has included telephone death threats, being shot at, physical assault by a police officer and arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

Eren Keskin has faced 86 lawsuits in relation to her human rights activities. In one trial she was charged with “insulting the state security forces”. Her crime was to publicize the sexual torture that some of her women clients reported they had suffered in custody. In another trial she was charged with disseminating “separatist propaganda” after participating in a panel discussion on Violence against Women.

Eren Keskin faces seemingly endless court cases as she supports the survivors of sexual torture. However, the Turkish authorities have yet to show any determination to use the courts to bring the torturers to justice.

Dear Minister,

I write to protest at the large number of criminal cases brought against Eren Keskin because of her work as a human rights defender, reporting the sexual torture of women in Turkey. I urge you to ensure that the charges against her are dropped. I call upon the government to demonstrate its total opposition to sexual violence and torture, and to ensure that those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice.

Yours sincerely,

Sayın Bakan

Bu kartý, Eren Keskin'in taciz edilmesi ve bir insan haklarý savunucusu olarak Türkiye'de kadýnlara yönelik cinsel iþkenceyle ilgili çalıþmalarýndan dolayı hakkýnda çok sayýda ceza davasý açýlmýþ olmasýný protesto etmek için yazýyorum. Sizden, Eren Keskin aleyhine açýlmýþ davalarýn düþürülmesini, hükümetin cinsel biddet ve iþkenceye karþý olduðunu göstermesini ve bu gibi suçlarýn faillerinin adalet önüne çýkartýlmasýný talep ederim.

Saygýlarýmla

name:

country:

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Adalet Bakanlýđy

06659

Turkey

“They electrified me on my genitals, on my toes, in my mouth, and they said ‘this is the mouth you use to defend human rights’.”

Human rights lawyer Gabriel Shumba

Human rights lawyer tortured with electrodes in Zimbabwe

Gabriel Shumba is a lawyer with the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, a non-governmental organization, who has given advice and assistance to many torture victims. When he was arrested in January 2003, he was tortured himself.

Gabriel Shumba was arrested by police on 15 January 2003 with four other people including an opposition Member of Parliament. When Gabriel Shumba appeared in court on 17 January, medical evidence was presented supporting his claim that he had been subjected to electric shocks from electrodes placed on his tongue, feet and genitals.

This was no isolated incident: Amnesty International has documented a pattern of harassment, arrest and torture in Zimbabwe. Rarely, if ever, are those responsible brought to justice. People who expose human rights violations are themselves at risk of arrest and torture. Those who stand up for an independent judiciary face intimidation and unfair trials. Human rights defenders in Zimbabwe fear for their safety and in some cases, for their lives.

Your Excellency,

I write to protest at the torture of Gabriel Shumba in police custody. Gabriel Shumba was detained, tortured and charged solely because of his work with victims of human rights abuses.

I call upon you and the Zimbabwean authorities to enable human rights activists to work without fear of harassment, arrest or torture and to investigate this crime, ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Yours sincerely,

name:

country:

Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
11th Floor Mukwati Building
Private Bag 7703
Causeway, Harare
Zimbabwe

Act now to stop torture!

- Join Amnesty International – together we can make a difference.
- Contact Amnesty International and other human rights organizations working to eliminate torture to see how you can help.
- Write to your government asking what it is doing to combat torture in your country and around the world.
- Write to your government asking for assurances that it has ratified the UN Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol.

For further information please write to the address in the box below, if there is one:

Or contact Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London:

Campaign against Torture,

Amnesty International,

Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Or visit the Amnesty International website:

www.amnesty.org

Together against torture

I want to do what I can to stop torture.

I won't be silent while torture continues around the world.

Please send me information on how I can campaign against torture with Amnesty International.

Thank you.

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Campaign against Torture,

Amnesty International,

International Secretariat,
Peter Benenson House,
1 Easton Street,
London, WC1X 0DW,
United Kingdom