

EXTERNAL

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Health concern / Legal concern

5 January 1996

EGYPT Mohammad 'Abd al-Magid 'Abd al-Berri, aged 70

Amnesty has fears for the health of Mohammad 'Abd al-Magid 'Abd al-Berri who was arrested at the end of December 1995 and is believed to be held in Istiqbal Tora Prison. He reportedly suffers from various illnesses, including asthma, acute short-sightedness, heart problems and diabetes. These fears are heightened by the fact that he is held in a prison where visits by families and lawyers have been banned since September 1994.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mohammad 'Abd al-Magid 'Abd al-Berri, a 70-year-old retired man, was arrested at his house in Cairo reportedly 12 days ago. He allegedly spent one night at the headquarters of the State Security Investigations Department in Lazoghly Square. He was then interrogated by the *Niyaba* (procuracy) and charged with passing on instructions received by telephone from his son in London to members of *al-Gihad* (Holy Struggle), a banned Islamist group, and harbouring alleged members of the group in his house. He has reportedly denied all these charges.

Amnesty International fears that his arrest and continued detention may be linked to the fact that his son, who is a political refugee in London, has been sought by the Egyptian Government. He may be held as a substitute prisoner. The organization has in the past documented cases of families and relatives of individuals sought by the police being arrested and detained until those on the run gave themselves up. In recent weeks, the Egyptian Government has criticized European countries for granting political asylum to Egyptian Islamist activists and has sought their extradition.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French, Arabic or your own language:

- urging that Mohammad 'Abd al-Magid 'Abd al-Berri be humanely treated, and in view of his ill health and his age, be given access to urgent medical care, a lawyer of his own choosing, and visits by members of his family;
- seeking information about the exact charges against him;
- seeking assurances that he is not being held as a substitute prisoner.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency, Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt
Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt
Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN
Fax: + 202 269 54 17
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency, General Hassan al-Alfy
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Al-Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk

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Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 355 7792

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr

The Human Rights Department

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 574 7839

Dr Fathi Sorour

Speaker

The People's Assembly

Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 February 1996.