

PUBLIC

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10 January 2002

Further information on UA 324/01 (MDE 12/035/2001, 19 December 2001) - forcible return / risk of torture

SWEDEN/EGYPT Muhammad Muhammad Suleiman Ibrahim El-Zari (m), aged 33

Ahmed Hussein Mustafa Kamil Agiza (m), aged 39
Hanan Ahmed Fouad 'Abd al-Khaleq (f), his wife
Their five children

Hanan Ahmed Fouad 'Abd al-Khaleq has gone into hiding with her five children, fearing that the Swedish authorities are about to forcibly return them to Egypt. She has submitted a complaint to the United Nations Committee against Torture, arguing that Sweden has violated her rights under the Convention against Torture, by attempting to return her to a country where she would be at risk of torture.

The Swedish government rejected her application for refugee status on 18 December, in an unfair procedure in which she was denied the right to appeal against the initial decision. Her husband Ahmed Hussein Mustafa Kamil Agiza was forcibly returned to Egypt on 18 December, together with Muhammad Muhammad Suleiman Ibrahim El-Zari.

If she is returned to Egypt, Hanan Ahmed Fouad 'Abd al-Khaleq is liable to be tortured, chiefly because her husband is alleged to be a member of an armed Islamist group. Female relatives of suspected members of Islamist organizations in Egypt have been subjected to grave human rights violations. Women have been tortured, or threatened with torture, to make them give information about their male relatives' alleged activities, or to pressurize the relatives themselves into confessing.

There has been no news of Ahmed Hussein Mustafa Kamil Agiza and Muhammad Muhammad Suleiman Ibrahim El-Zari since they were returned to Egypt, over three weeks ago. Their relatives and lawyers have tried to find out what has happened to them, and sought permission to see them, without success. Amnesty International fears they are held incommunicado, at grave risk of torture and ill-treatment.

The Swedish government maintained that the men would not be at risk of serious human rights violations in Egypt, on the basis of written guarantees from the Egyptian authorities. However, these guarantees have proven to be wholly insufficient.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Swedish or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Hanan Ahmed Fouad 'Abd al-Khaleq and her five children are at imminent risk of being forcibly returned to Egypt, and calling for all attempts to return them to be halted;
- calling on the Swedish authorities to ensure that her application for refugee status is reassessed in a fair procedure;
- urging the Swedish authorities to find out where Muhammad Muhammad Suleiman Ibrahim El-Zari and Ahmed Hussein Mustafa Kamil Agiza are held, and to ensure that representatives of the Swedish embassy in Egypt meet with the two men, find out how they have been treated, and ensure that they have access to legal counsel;

- stressing that the forcible return of any person to a country where they are at risk of serious human rights violations is a violation of Sweden's obligations under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Göran Persson
Prime Minister's Office
SE-103 33 Stockholm
Sweden

Fax: + 46 8 723 11 71

E-mail: registrator@primeminister.ministry.se

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Foreign Minister Anna Lindh
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Box 161 21
SE-103 39 Stockholm
Sweden

Fax: + 46 8 723 11 76

E-mail: registrator@foreign.ministry.se

Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Sven G. Linder
Embassy of Sweden
13, Mohamed Mazhar Street
PO Box 131
11211 Zamalek
Egypt

Fax: +20 2 735 43 57

E-mail: ambassaden.kairo@foreign.ministry.se

Salutation: Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of Sweden accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 February 2002.