

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 12/04/97

UA 18/97

"Disappearance" / Fear for safety

17 January 1997

EGYPT Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez (f), aged 18

Amnesty International has just received reports that Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez, an 18-year-old woman who has been missing since mid-1996, has been sighted in a prison outside Cairo. The prison authorities have denied that she is being held there and Amnesty International fears for her safety.

Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez reportedly left the family home in the al-Marg district of Cairo on the morning of 18 August 1996 to go shopping. She did not return. Upon inquiring in the neighbourhood later that day, her family were told that a group of security officers had been stationed in the area that morning, and that a number of suspected Islamists had been arrested. Amnesty International fears that Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez may have been among those arrested. There have been unconfirmed reports that she was sighted in September in detention in a State Security Investigations Department building in Cairo.

In early January 1997 the family received reports that their daughter had been seen in al-Qanater al-Khairiya Prison (women's section) outside Cairo. Members of her family went to the prison on 15 January. Once they arrived there they were asked at the reception whom they wanted to visit. They wrote the name of the daughter and handed it in to the woman guard. After checking the name against prisoners' names on the prison register the guard told them that they could go inside to see their daughter. However, they waited for a long time and then were told without any further explanation that their daughter was not there, and were asked to leave immediately.

Amnesty International fears that Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez may have been subjected to torture since her "disappearance" on 18 August 1996 and remains concerned for her safety in detention. Torture is systematically used against detainees in Egypt. In May 1996 the United Nations Committee against Torture issued a report summarizing the processes of a confidential inquiry carried out since 1991. It concluded that "torture is systematically practised by the Security Forces in Egypt, in particular by State Security Intelligence" and the Committee urged the Egyptian Government to "make particular efforts to prevent its security forces from acting as a State within a State, for they seem to escape control by superior authorities".

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

- expressing grave concern at the "disappearance" of Marwa al-Sayyid Metwalli Hafez;
- urging that the authorities establish and make public her whereabouts as a matter of urgency and either charge her with a recognizably criminal offence or release her immediately and unconditionally;
- urging that she be humanely treated;
- calling for a public enquiry into her "disappearance" and for those found responsible to be brought to justice.

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
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Telexes: 21361 MOICM
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Cairo, Egypt
Salutation: Dear Minister

General Mabil Sayyam
Director of Prisons
Maslahat al-Suglin
al-Gala'a St
Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: General Sayyam, Director Prisons, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: +202 574 5561 (if voice, ask for fax)
Salutation: Dear General

COPIES TO:

Al-Mustashar Ahmad Sayyid Ahmad
Assistant Public Prosecutor and
Head of the Human Rights Department
The Public Prosecutors Office
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: (20 2)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 10 March 1997.