

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office / Middle East sub-regional team
Date: 10 February 1998

FOLLOW-UP TO MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

(See MDE 12/07/97 - 8 April 1997)

Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani

EGYPT

Keywords:

Theme: Administrative detention

Profession/Association: Doctor/Egyptian Medical Syndicate

Summary

Attached is information on the re-arrest, immediately after release, of Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani. Dr al-Za'farani is one of 12 doctors, all but one of whom were sentenced to terms of imprisonment in November 1995 for membership of the *Muslim Brothers* organization. (The twelfth was sentenced the following year on the same charges.) Dr al-Za'farani is currently held under administrative detention and no reason has as yet been given for his re-arrest.

Recommended action:

Letters are requested from medical professionals:

- expressing concern that Dr Ibrahim Khalil al -Za'farani was arrested only hours after his release from prison on 22 January 1998 having served a three-year prison term
- stating that you considered Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani a prisoner of conscience during his 1995-1998 period of imprisonment
- asking what explanation there is for his re-arrest and urging his immediate and unconditional release;

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency General Habib al-'Adeli
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Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
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Telexes: 21361 MOICM UN
Fax: + 202 355 7792
Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Faruq Sayf al-Nasr

Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Midan Lazoghly, Cairo, Egypt
Telegrams: Minister Sayf al-Nasr, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: + 202 355 8103
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

Mr Raga' al-'Arabi
Public Prosecutor
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Copies to

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and to Egyptian diplomatic representatives in your country.

Please seek appeals from your national Medical Association

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Re-arrest of Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani EGYPT

Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani was re-arrested on 22 January 1998 within hours of returning home after his release from serving a three-year prison term. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani, Secretary General of the Alexandria branch of the Egyptian Medical Syndicate and head of its human rights committee, is reported to have been summoned, on the day of his release, by an officer of the State Security Investigations Department (SSI) to the headquarters of the SSI branch in Alexandria. He was detained there until 26 January and then transferred to Cairo where he was returned to Mazra'at Tora Prison and issued with a new detention order. He was not given any reason for his re-arrest and is held under a renewable administrative detention order.

Dr al-Za'farani was originally arrested in January 1995, together with 28 other alleged members of the *Muslim Brothers* organization. Subsequent arrests of other members of the organization took place in July and October that year. They were tried by a military court in November 1995, according to the remit of a presidential decree, and charged with plotting against the government to establish an Islamic state. The real reason for their arrests, however, is likely to have been connected with their campaign to participate in November 1995 legislative elections. Three Amnesty International delegates attended sessions of the trial and were able to meet with a number of the defendants, their defence lawyers and members of the court, including the President. The defendants had not used nor advocated the use of violence. Those arrested in this connection include another 11 doctors, besides Dr al-Za'farani, and Amnesty International continues to campaign for their release.

The *Muslim Brothers* organization

The *Muslim Brothers'* organization, founded in 1928, is probably the biggest and most influential opposition force in Egypt. Its aim is the establishment of a system of rule in the country based on Islamic values and principles. Although the organization was banned in 1954, it was tolerated from the late 1970s by the Egyptian authorities. A wave of arrests at the beginning of 1995 marked the beginning of the Egyptian government's implementation of a program of repression aimed at the organization, targeting in particular the professional associations. The Engineers Syndicate has been under judicial control since mid-1995 and the Bar Association was placed under judicial control in January 1996.

Although in the past the *Muslim Brothers* organization did advocate the use of violence, their position on this has changed in more recent years and, in addition to affirming that the organization neither engages in nor supports acts of violence, it has consistently condemned the violent activities of armed Islamist groups. Amnesty International considers that those who have been convicted solely on the grounds of membership or support of the *Muslim Brothers* and who have not used or advocated violence are prisoners of conscience.

The *Muslim Brothers* have repeatedly stated that they believe that the only way to bring about changes beneficial to the country and its people is through legal means, and through dialogue with the government. They also insist that progress can only be made through the modification and reform of the country's political system to allow organizations such as the *Muslim Brothers* the freedom to form political parties and publish their literature.

Amnesty International is calling for Dr Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani's immediate and unconditional release and is seeking an explanation from the Egyptian authorities of the reasons for his re-arrest just hours after completion of his three-year sentence.