

PUBLIC

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18 March 2003

UA 77/03 Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

EGYPT Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim (m)

Amnesty International has learned that Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim, an engineering student at Mansoura University in northern Egypt, was detained in the early hours of 13 March at his home by officers of the State Security Intelligence (SSI). He is believed to be held incommunicado at the office of the State Security Intelligence forces in Mansoura and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The detention of Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim is believed to be related to his involvement in political activities of Islamist students in Mansoura, including a recent demonstration against the threatened war in Iraq. According to Amnesty International's information, Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim is not known to have been charged with any offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture of political detainees is common in Egypt, in State Security Intelligence (SSI) branches, police stations and occasionally prisons. The most common methods of torture reported are: electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles, burning with cigarettes, and various forms of psychological torture, including death threats and threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or their female relatives.

Over the past few weeks, more than a dozen political activists and anti-war demonstrators have been detained. Anti-war activist Kamal Khalil was released on 7 March after almost three weeks in detention (see UA 51/03, MDE 12/005/2003, 21 February 2003 and updates). Others have been held for more than a month in administrative detention under emergency legislation. The relatives of a recent detainee did not know where he was being held for approximately one week. A journalist and political activist reported on his release, that he was beaten and blindfolded while detained at the headquarters of the SSI.

In November 2002, the UN Committee against Torture expressed "particular concern at the widespread evidence of torture and ill-treatment in administrative premises under the control of the State Security Investigation Department, the infliction of which is reported to be facilitated by the lack of any mandatory inspection by an independent body of such premises". In 1995 the UN Special Rapporteur on torture called for a total ban on incommunicado detention.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim is being held in incommunicado detention at the SSI headquarters in Mansoura;
- urging the authorities to reveal where Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim is held, and to ensure he has access to his lawyer, relatives and any medical attention he may require;
- calling on the authorities to provide a guarantee that Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling for Haitham Sa'ad Ibrahim to be immediately released if not to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telegram: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg
Fax: + 202 390 1998
Telex: 93794 WAZRA UN
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency General Habib al-Adeli
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Al-Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

Telegram: Minister of Interior, Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: moi@idsc.gov.eg
Fax: + 202 579 2031
Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mr Faruq Sayf al-Nasr
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Midan Lazoghly, Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: moheb@idsc.gov.eg
Fax: + 202 795 8103
Salutation: Dear Minister

Counsellor Maher 'Abd al-Wahid
Public Prosecutor
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 577 4716
Salutation: Dear Public Prosecutor

COPIES 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 29 April 2003.