

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture / "disappearance"

5 March 1998

**EGYPT' Abd al-Rahman Lutfi, farmer aged 42 and secretary of the opposition Labour Party in Mallawi, Upper Egypt**

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The whereabouts of 'Abd al-Rahman Lutfi are unknown after he was reportedly arrested on 12 February 1998 in Mallawi, Minya Governorate, Upper Egypt. Amnesty International fears that he may be at risk of torture.

'Abd al-Rahman Lutfi, the secretary of the opposition Labour Party in Mallawi, was arrested together with 'Ala' al-Din Higazi, a lawyer. Both were initially detained at a police station in Mallawi. On 18 February, however, 'Ala' al-Din Higazi was released but 'Abd al-Rahman Lutfi, who had started a hunger strike in protest at his detention, was said to have been transferred to another location.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The labour Party is one of the main legal opposition parties in Egypt. Since the end of the 1980s it has increasingly adopted political Islam as its ideology. Leading members of the party have often been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and have been tortured.

Torture of political prisoners continues to be systematic in Egypt. This is particularly the case in State Security Investigations Department (SSI) branches, police stations and occasionally prisons around the country.

The most common torture methods 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. Lawyers and local human rights groups have lodged hundreds of complaints of torture with the Public Prosecutor's Office, but no impartial investigations are known to have been conducted.

In May 1996 the United Nations Committee against Torture issued a report summarizing the results of a confidential inquiry carried out since 1991 over a period of five years. It concluded that *"torture is systematically practised by the Security Forces in Egypt, in particular by State Security Intelligence"*.

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"*. The Egyptian Government has so far failed to implement any of the recommendations made by the Committee.

Among those recommendations were the need to *"set up an independent investigation machinery, including in its composition judges, lawyers and medical doctors, that should efficiently examine all the allegations of torture, in order to bring them expeditiously before the courts. This independent group should also monitor the safeguards against torture guaranteed to persons deprived of their liberty under Egyptian law, in particular by having access to all the places where allegations of torture have been reported...."*

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

- expressing concern at the reported "disappearance" of 'Abd al-Rahman Lutfi;

- urging that the authorities establish and make public his current whereabouts as a matter of urgency and either charge him with a recognizably criminal offence or release him immediately and unconditionally;
- seeking assurances that he is being humanely treated;
- urging that he be given immediate access to a lawyer of his own choosing, to his family and to medical care if required.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency General Habib al-'Adeli  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt  
**Telegrams: Minister Habib al-'Adeli, Cairo, Egypt**  
**Telexes: 21361 MOICM UN**  
**Faxes: + 202 579 2031**  
**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**  
**Faxes: + 202 355 5700**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Ms Nayla Gabr  
The Human Rights Department  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt  
**Faxes: + 202 574 9533**

Mr Raga' al-'Arabi  
Public Prosecutor  
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali  
Ramses 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 17 April 1998.