

EXTERNAL

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Fear of torture / Death in custody

21 August 1996

EGYPT Sayyid 'Abbas Sayyid
Taha Mansour
Sa'id Taghour
Hisham Mohammad 'Abdu
'Abd al-Hamid Mahmoud Qutb Khalil

Ahmad Mohammad 'Abd al-'Adhim Higazi

Amnesty International has received alarming reports that Ahmad Mohammad 'Abd al-'Adhim Higazi died last week in the headquarters of the State Security Investigations Department (SSI) in Lazoghly Square, Cairo, allegedly as a result of torture. His body has now been handed to the family for burial.

The news of his death heightens fears for the other five other people named above, who are believed to be still held in the SSI headquarters and who have also allegedly been tortured. Methods of torture reportedly used against them are believed to have included beatings, electric shocks, suspension in contorted positions and the extinguishing of cigarettes on their bodies.

The six were among a group of 43 suspected members of *Talai' al-Fatah* (the Vanguard of the Conquest) - a splinter group of *al-Gihad* (Holy Struggle) who were arrested during the first half of July 1996 in Cairo and four other governorates. They have reportedly been accused of "possession of large quantities of dynamite and preparing to overthrow the regime".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has over the years issued numerous reports documenting the systematic use of torture against political detainees in Egypt, the last of which was published in July 1996 and entitled *Egypt: Indefinite detention and systematic torture: the forgotten victims* (MDE 12/18/96). Torture continues to take place in the SSI headquarters in Lazoghly Square, SSI branches in the country, police stations and *Firqat al-Amn* (security brigades). The most common methods reported are the use of electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles, extinguishing of cigarettes on the body, and various forms of psychological torture and ill-treatment, including threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or his female relatives in front of him.

The organization has repeatedly urged the Egyptian Government to eradicate the use of torture, and to set up prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture.

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." The Committee also urged the Government to set up a "thorough investigation into the conduct of the police forces in order to establish the truth or otherwise of the many allegations of acts of torture, bring the persons responsible for those acts before the courts and issue and transmit to the police specific and clear instructions designed to prohibit any act of torture in the future."

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

- expressing concern at the alleged torture of the six detainees in the SSI headquarters in Cairo, which has reportedly led to the death of Ahmad Mohammad 'Abd al-'Adhim Higazi;
- seeking assurances that the five detainees and others are treated humanely in accordance with international standards and in particular have access to their lawyers, families and medical care;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the death of Ahmad Mohammad 'Abd al-'Adhim Higazi and the reported torture of the five others. The methods and conclusions of these investigations should be made public within reasonable time, and any member of the security forces implicated in torture and ill-treatment of detainees should 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

COPIES TO:

Al-Mustashar Ahmad al-Sayyid Ahmad
Assistant Public Prosecutor and
Head of the Human Rights Unit
The Public Prosecutor 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 30 September 1996.