

PUBLIC

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Possible prisoner of conscience/health concern

25 September 2001

EGYPT Farid Zahran (m), aged 44, NGO activist

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NGO activist Farid Zahran was arrested by plainclothes security officers in Cairo on 20 September. Amnesty International believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience, and is concerned that although he has a serious heart condition he is not receiving adequate medical care.

Farid Zahran is a leading activist with the Egyptian People's Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian *Intifada*, which campaigns in support of the year-long Palestinian uprising. On 10 September they had organized a demonstration expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people and criticizing the United States' support for Israel.

Farid Zahran was arrested on al-Tayaran Street, in the Madinat Nasr suburb of Cairo. He was held incommunicado at the headquarters of the State Security Intelligence (SSI) in Lazoghly Square until the following evening, when he was brought before the State Security Prosecution, which deals with offences related to national security.

The State Security Prosecution accused him of "disturbing public security" and "organizing public assemblies", and ordered him to be detained for 15 days. He is now held at Mazra'at Tora Prison, and has not been formally charged.

Farid Zahran underwent heart surgery in 1998, and was reportedly scheduled to have a heart bypass this year. In prison he has not yet been seen by a doctor, despite repeated requests by his lawyers.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Egyptian authorities generally impose tight restrictions on public gatherings, and on numerous occasions the security forces have used violent means to break up demonstrations. Farid Zahran's detention comes just days before the anniversary of the start of the Palestinian *Intifada*. Public demonstrations are expected to mark the event in Egypt, on or around 28 September.

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

- expressing concern at the imprisonment of Farid Zahran, who was arrested on 20 September, and pointing out that if he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and assembly, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience, who should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is treated humanely in custody, and that he is given immediate access to medical care.

#### **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**  
**Emails: moi2@idsc.gov.eg or: moi1@idsc.gov.eg**  
**Faxes: + 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 Sayf al-Nasr, Cairo, Egypt**

**Faxes: +202 795 8103**

**E-mail: moheb@idscl.gov.eg**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

The Human Rights Department

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

**Faxes: + 202 574 9533**

Counsellor Maher 'Abd al-Wahid

Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali

Ramses Street

Cairo

EGYPT

**Fax: + 202 577 47 16**

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 6 November 2001.