

25 July 2001

AI Index MDE 16/003/2001 - News Service Nr. 129

News Flash

Jordan: Amnesty International deplores State Security Court trial sentences

Amnesty International today deplored the sentencing of nine men to life imprisonment by the State Security Court (SSC) on 22 July 2001 for their alleged involvement in politically motivated bombings in March and April 1998.

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern in statements and letters to the Jordanian authorities, including the Prime Minister, that the initial trial of these defendants before the SSC and their conviction were flawed and may have been based on confessions allegedly made under duress. The organization criticised their trial before the SSC, whose procedures fall short of international standards for fair trial, and called for a retrial before an ordinary criminal court.

The defendants complained that they were tortured and ill-treated. But no proper investigation was carried out by the authorities into these allegations.

The Court of Cassation ordered in April 2001 a retrial of the nine defendants who had already been sentenced by the SSC to terms of up to life imprisonment.

"We hope that the Court of Cassation, which will examine these cases, will order another retrial, but this time it must insist it is before an ordinary criminal court," Amnesty International said.

Background

The defendants --young men allegedly belonging to a previously unknown Islamist group Jama'at al-Islah wa'l-Tahaddi (Reform and Challenge Group)-- were arrested between 4 and 7 May 1998 and charged with carrying out a series of politically-motivated bombings in March and April 1998. After arrest they were held without access to the outside world for two months in the

detention centre of the General Intelligence Department in Wadi Sir. They alleged that during this time they were tortured by beatings, sleep deprivation and by being suspended from the ceiling.

Families of the detainees stated that marks of torture were still visible on their bodies when they were at last allowed to visit the detainees in July 1998. The medical examinations they requested were only carried out five months after the initial arrest, when the marks of torture could have faded or healed, and apparently found no physical evidence suggesting the use of torture.

Those in detention sentenced to life imprisonment are >Abd al-Naser Shehadeh al-Khamayseh; Samer Mahmud >Amer; Ra=ed >Abd al-Karim al-Kafafi; Ahmad Husayn >Abdallah and Samir Sa=id Shabayeh. Khaled Tawfiq al->Aruri, a former policeman, was sentenced to 15 years= imprisonment. Three others were sentenced in absentia.

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>