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Egyptian military urged to halt torture of detainees

Amnesty International has today urged the Egyptian military to take action to stop the use of torture and other ill treatment against detainees, amid fresh evidence of abuse.

The call comes as former detainees have told Amnesty International they were tortured, including by whipping and with electric shocks, after being detained by members of the military in the last days before President Mubarak stood down.

“The Egyptian military authorities have committed publicly to creating a climate of freedom and democracy after so many years of state repression. Now they must match their words with direct and immediate action,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“The military authorities must intervene to end torture and other abuse of detainees, which we now know to have been taking place in military custody.”

Recently released detainees told Amnesty International researchers in Egypt that members of the armed forces used beatings, whipping and other forms of torture and other ill-treatment to intimidate protestors and to obtain information about plans for the protests.

“The authorities must immediately issue clear instructions to all security forces and members of the army that torture or other ill-treatment of detainees will not be tolerated, and that those responsible for these abuses will be held to account”, said Malcolm Smart.

One former detainee, a 29-year-old decorator from Gharbiya Province north of Cairo, told Amnesty International he was tortured by soldiers on 3 February in an annexe to the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities:

“They called me a traitor and a foreign agent and forced me to take off my clothes except my underwear and to lie face down on the floor. Then they beat me with a whip and stepped with boots on my back and on my hands. They kicked me. Many other detainees there were also beaten with a whip”, he said.

After an interrogation by a man in plain clothes, the 29-year old, whose name is being withheld to protect his security, was beaten over the head with a chair by a soldier, leaving him unconscious.

He told Amnesty International that he was moved on 4 February to another location, where he was beaten, subjected to electric shocks and threatened with rape, and then taken to a military prison in El Heikstep, northeast of Cairo. He said he was regularly beaten by soldiers there until his release on 10 February.

In a separate case, an 18-year-old student from Cairo told Amnesty International that he was tortured at an unknown location after being arrested by soldiers near Tahrir Square on 3 February.

“They put a chain or rope to my legs and lifted me up – so that my head was hanging down. From time to time they would let me down into a barrel that was filled with water. They told me to confess that I was trained by Israel or by Iran. They also put electric shocks to my body and I fainted,” he said.

Amnesty International also spoke to relatives and friends of two brothers in their late twenties who are still being detained without charge in Tora prison, south of Cairo.

Arrested on 30 January by military police while carrying leaflets in support of the protests, they were held in the Nasser Military Academy in Cairo’s Agouza district, where they say they were whipped and subjected to electric shocks.

“The authorities must immediately disclose the names and whereabouts of all detainees and either release them promptly or charge them with recognizable criminal offences,” said Malcolm Smart.

“Those now in power must ensure that all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, that officials responsible for such abuses are brought to justice, and that victims receive full reparation.”

Background

On 12 February the Supreme Military Council announced that Egypt would abide by its international treaties. Egypt has been a party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment since 1987.