

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

25 January 1991

EGYPT : Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Tala'at

Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Tala'at is a medical doctor in his forties. According to reports received by Amnesty International he was arrested at dawn at his home on 23 January 1991 and taken to the publishing company of which he is director, where personal papers and money from the safe were seized. His current whereabouts are unknown.

On 22 January, Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Talaat's company had reportedly published a statement by the Egyptian Medical Association which condemned "the attacks of the allied forces on the Iraqi Muslim people".

Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Talaat was previously arrested in June 1989 and detained for three months, during which he was subjected to electric shocks applied to his genitals and nipples, beaten and punched, stripped and threatened with sexual abuse. His case is described in detail in Egypt: Recent Human Rights Violations under the State of Emergency, (AI Index: MDE 12/07/90). Despite official complaints about his torture to the Egyptian authorities by the Egyptian Medical Association and Dr Abdul Latif's lawyer, no investigation into his allegations of torture has been carried out.

Amnesty International believes Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Tala'at may be a prisoner of conscience and fears that he may be subjected to physical and psychological torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent months there have been mass arrests among members and sympathizers of Islamic groups in Egypt and among Palestinians, Iraqis and other Arab nationals living in Egypt who are suspected of being opposed to the Egyptian Government's policy in the Gulf. The first wave came in the wake of the assassination, in October 1990, of the Speaker of the People's Assembly, Dr Rifa'at al-Mahgoub. Amnesty International received allegations of torture of some of those held at that time (see UA 461/90, MDE 12/12/90, 14 November).

More recent arrests have taken place throughout Egypt of individuals criticizing Egypt's role in the Gulf war and the attacks on Iraq.

The torture of political detainees held under emergency legislation has been reported over many years. Detainees are held in incommunicado detention, without access to lawyers, relatives or medical doctors. In a report issued on 17 October 1990 Amnesty International urged the Egyptian Government to respect its obligations under national and international law, to investigate all allegations of torture and bring to justice those responsible. The organization also called for immediate measures to be taken to safeguard detainees from torture or ill-treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported arrest of Dr Muhammad Abdul Latif Talaat;
- seeking information about the reasons for his arrest and urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released if he is being held for the non-violent expression of his beliefs;
- requesting assurances that he is not being subjected to any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and expressing concern that when he was imprisoned on a previous occasion in 1989 he was subjected to torture;
- urging that he be given immediate access to a lawyer;
- asking where he is being held and what the legal basis for his detention is.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency General Muhammad 'Abd al-Halim Moussa
 Minister of the Interior
 Al Sheikh Rihan Street
 Bab al-Louq
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 21361 MOICM UN

Faxes: +20 2 724 241, Attn: Head of Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a request to forward to the Minister of Interior

His Excellency Badr al-Minyawi
 Prosecutor General
 Dar Al Qada' Al Aali
 26th July Street
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Telegrams: Prosecutor General, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 21712/23392/93862 KHARG UN (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

COPIES TO:

His Excellency Dr Ahmad 'Esmat 'Abd al-Maguid
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Midan At-Tahrir
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 March 1991.