

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 12/002/2008  
20 February 2008

Further Information on UA 202/07 (MDE 12/025/2007, 7 August 2007) and follow-up (MDE 12/032/2007, 18 September 2007) – Fear for safety/use of excessive force

EGYPT                    Hundreds of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees from Sudan and other sub-Saharan African countries

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On 19 February Egyptian security forces shot dead a Sudanese man trying to cross into Israel. A total of five African migrants have now been killed crossing the border so far this year. Security officials said 50-year-old Ermeniry Khasheef was shot in the back after he ignored orders to stop as he attempted to cross barbed wire near the border town of Rafah, in the north of the Sinai Peninsula.

An Eritrean woman, Mervat Mer Hatover, had been shot dead three days earlier, after she ignored orders to stop as she was attempting to jump over the barbed wire in the El Kuntilla border region, in south-eastern Sinai Peninsula. According to security officials, Mervat Mer Hatover and her two daughters, aged eight and 10, had been among a group of Africans who paid smugglers to help them cross into Israel. All were arrested. The military prosecutor has reportedly ordered an autopsy on Mervat Mer Hatover but no proper investigation is known to have taken place.

On 30 January two migrants from Ivory Coast were shot and killed trying to cross the border south of Rafah. According to the Egyptian security forces, a 22-year-old man and an 18-year-old woman bled to death before an ambulance could reach them. Six Eritreans and two Ethiopians were also arrested. On 19 January, another man from Ivory Coast bled to death after he was shot in the thigh at the border with Israel. A Sudanese and a Guinean were arrested.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thousands of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea or other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, try to cross from Egypt to Israel each year. Their numbers have been increasing since 2007.

In July 2007 alone, over 230 mostly Sudanese migrants were arrested trying to cross into Israel without official permission. According to the UNHCR some two to three million Sudanese nationals live in Egypt; most of them are migrants but they also include thousands of refugees who have fled persecution in Sudan. Israel has put pressure on Egypt to reduce the flow of people crossing the border into its territory without authorization.

The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials both require Egyptian security forces, including border police, to use lethal force only when their own lives are in immediate danger and there is no other means to respond to that danger.

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

- expressing concern that three men and two women have been shot dead by Egyptian security forces since the beginning of 2008, as they attempted to cross the border into Israel,
- noting the order of the military prosecutor to have an autopsy on Mervat Mer Hatover and calling on the authorities to order a thorough and impartial investigation into the killings inline with the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, to make the result of this investigation public and to bring anyone found to have used excessive or illegal force to justice,
- reminding the authorities that Egypt's security forces, including border police, are required to use lethal force only when their own lives are in immediate danger.

**APPEALS TO:**

Interior Minister

Minister Habib Ibrahim El Adly  
Ministry of the Interior  
25 Al-Sheikh Rihan Street  
Bab al-Louk  
Cairo, EGYPT

**Fax:** +20 2 279 0682  
**Email:** moi@idsc.gov.eg  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Mohamed Hussein Tantawi  
Ministry of Defence and Military Production  
23 July Street  
Kobry el Obba  
Cairo, EGYPT

**Fax:** +202 22906004  
**Email:** mod@afmic.gov.eg  
mmc@afmic.gov.eg  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

**COPIES TO:**

President, national human rights council

Dr Botros Botros Ghali  
National Council for Human Rights  
1113 Corniche of the Nil-  
Midane Al Tahrir-  
Specialized National Councils Building- 11 floor  
Cairo, EGYPT

**Fax:** +20 2 2574 7497/14  
**Email:** nchr@nchr.org.eg  
**Salutation:** Dear President Botros Ghali

**COPIES 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 2 April 2008.