

WWA February 2000

FINAL TEXT

Egypt

Three juveniles and 26 others detained and reportedly tortured

Khaled 'Abd al-Latif, a high-school student, was arrested only a couple of days after his 17th birthday at the end of November 1998 in Kum al-Ahmar, a town southwest of Cairo. He was arrested with 28 others, two of whom – Samir Abd al-Nabi Abd al-Magid and Abd al-Aziz Sa'ad – are also juveniles. All 29 were detained at a branch of the State Security Investigation Department in Giza, where several of the group were reportedly beaten, suspended by the limbs for long periods of time and given electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body. They were kept in incommunicado detention for some weeks before being transferred to prison. In March 1999 the State Security Prosecution opened an investigation against them, on charges of membership of al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, an armed Islamist group. In August it closed the investigation, having failed to substantiate the charges, and ordered the release of all 29. Instead, the Ministry of the Interior issued administrative detention orders for the group. Administrative detention has been systematically used by the authorities to detain suspected sympathisers or members of armed Islamist groups. Khaled 'Abd al-Latif continues to be detained in Damanhour prison, in the Delta region, a prison where detention conditions amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

+ Please write, calling for Khaled 'Abd al-Latif, Samir Abd al-Nabi Abd al-Magid and Abd al-Aziz Sa'ad and the 26 others to be released, and asking that the allegations of torture be investigated. Send appeals to: General Habib al-'Adeli, Ministry of the Interior, Al-Sheikh Riham Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt (fax: + 202 579 2031).

Colombia

Impunity reigns - more lives at risk

On 30 January 1999 human rights defenders Julio González and Everardo de Jesús Puerta were dragged from a bus travelling from Medellín to Bogotá and shot dead. One year later their murderers have still not been brought to justice.

Despite confirmation from witnesses that the two were singled out, the official investigation into the killing of Julio González and Everardo de Jesús Puerta reportedly concluded that they were the victims of a bungled robbery attempt on passengers. The repeated failure to prosecute those responsible for attacks on human rights defenders sends out a lethal message. It lets perpetrators know that they may continue this campaign of terror with impunity.

Julio González and Everardo de Jesús Puerta worked for the Colombian non-governmental organization Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (CSPP), Committee of Solidarity with

Political Prisoners. The CSPP is an internationally respected human rights organization which works for the legal defence of political prisoners and the promotion and protection of civil and political rights. CSPP workers have previously suffered serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and “disappearances” at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary groups. For much of 1999 the grave security situation forced the CSPP to close their nationwide offices.

+ Please write, calling for an independent and impartial investigation into the murder of Julio González and Everardo de Jesús Puerta. Call for measures to ensure those responsible for human rights violations are brought to justice. Also ask for all appropriate measures to be taken to guarantee the safety of CSPP workers and all other human rights defenders in Colombia. Send appeals to: President Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia (fax:+ 57 1 286 7434).

Equatorial Guinea

Two opposition members held as prisoners of conscience

When Mariano Oyono Ndong visited Carmelo Biko Ngua’s house to discuss politics over dinner in May 1999, neither suspected that they would be arrested a few days later for “holding an illegal political meeting”. They were detained in Bate Prison until December 1999, when they were tried by a military court. Mariano Oyono Ndong was convicted of possessing “dubious material”, an issue of the periodical *La Verdad* (The Truth) produced by a legitimate opposition party, and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment. Carmelo Biko Ngua was convicted of possessing ammunition and sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. Unusually, he was released as he had already spent six months in pre-trial detention.

Antonio Engonga Bibang, Mariano Oyono Ndong's cousin, was arrested shortly after the other two men, apparently because he sent a letter to his cousin asking if an outstanding job had been completed. The authorities reportedly interpreted the letter as a reference to a plot to overthrow the government. In December 1999 Antonio Engonga Bibang was convicted of “insulting the government” and sentenced to a prison term of three years and a day.

All three men are members of the *Fuerza Demócrata Republicana* (FDR), Democratic Republican Force, an illegal opposition party. FDR activists are frequently held without charge or trial. Most are released after a few days or weeks in detention, often after paying “fines”.

+ Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mariano Oyono Ndong and Antonio Engonga Bibang. Send appeals to: Su Excelencia Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Presidente de la República, Gabinete del Presidente, Palacio del Pueblo, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea (fax: +24093313/3314).