

PUBLIC

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UA 202/07 **Fear for safety/Excessive Use of Force**

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

The lives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who daily try to cross the border from Egypt into Israel, may be in danger, following the use of excessive force by law enforcement officials in the area. This follows the reported death of two men believed to be of Sudanese origin, who were allegedly shot dead by Egyptian security forces as they attempted to cross the border during the night of 1 August 2007.

Egyptian official sources have denied that the shootings took place, although they have confirmed that two men were arrested by the Egyptian border police on 2 August, one of whom is said to be seriously injured. Amnesty International is concerned that Egypt and Israel may be sending law enforcement officials to the area who do not have the necessary training for dealing with crowd-control situations, thus putting the lives of more migrants, refugees and asylum seekers at risk.

Excessive use of force by the Egyptian security forces has increased over the last few weeks. Prior to this incident, a Sudanese woman died on 22 July 2007, after allegedly being shot by Egyptian security forces while she was attempting to cross the border with Israel. Other Sudanese, including an 11-year old girl, and a woman from the Ivory Coast were also injured at the scene. Twenty-two others from Sudan, Ivory Coast and Eritrea were also arrested by the Egyptian authorities.

Thousands of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who mostly come from Sudan and Eritrea as well as other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, try to cross from Egypt to Israel each year. Their numbers have been increasing in recent months and according to the Israeli Minister of Interior Roni Bar-On some 300 try to cross into Israel every week. Hundreds more are believed to be preparing to try to cross the same border.

Meanwhile, raids by the Egyptian security forces in the border area between Egypt and Israel in July 2007 alone have reportedly led to the arrests of over 220 mostly Sudanese migrants, who were trying to cross the border without official permission. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) some two to three million migrants, including thousands of refugees are currently living in Egypt. Most of whom are from Sudan. The increase in arrests follows an agreement between Egypt and Israel, due to the latter's pressure, at the beginning of July 2007, to reduce the flow of migrants crossing the border into Israel.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International acknowledges that states have the right to regulate entry of foreigners into their territory. However, the measures taken must not neglect or violate internationally recognized human rights law and standards. According to international standards such as 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, security force officers should use force in line with the principles of necessity and proportionality and should only employ firearms if lives are in danger and there is no other means to respond to that danger.

In May 2007, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families has in its concluding observations called on Egypt "to initiate training for all officials working in the area of migration, in particular police and border personnel ...".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible. Please write to Egyptian authorities (in Arabic, French or your own language):

- expressing concern for the safety of hundreds of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, who are believed to be preparing to try to cross the border from Egypt to Israel;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate action to ensure that any use of force by Egyptian security forces at the borders between Egypt and Israel be strictly in line with international human rights standards; in particular that intentional lethal use of firearms may only be used when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.
- calling for a prompt, impartial, thorough and independent investigation into the alleged killing of two Sudanese men and for its results to be made public, and those responsible for the killings to be brought to justice according to international standards for fair trial;
- calling on Egyptian authorities to investigate the death of the Sudanese woman on 22 July 2007 on the border between Israel and Egypt and to ensure that the investigations are prompt, comprehensive, independent and impartial, with the results made public and those responsible for the killings brought to justice according to international standards for fair trial

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace
Cairo
Egypt

Fax: +20223901998
e-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Fax: +2022790682
e-mail: moi@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: Dear Minister

and 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 18 September 2007.