

MDE 12/018/2011
17 February 2011

EGYPT

UA 32/11 - LETHAL FORCE USED AGAINST EGYPTIAN PRISONERS

Since rioting broke out on 28 January, the safety of hundreds of prisoners in al-Qatta al-Gadeed Prison north of Cairo, has been at risk. At least 25 prisoners and one prison officer are reported to have been killed, with the last two such deaths occurring last weekend.

Prisoners and their families report that dozens of other prisoners have been wounded and are not receiving professional medical attention. Some are receiving basic treatment from fellow inmates.

The unrest began on 28 January when al-Qatta al-Gadeed prisoners heard that prisoners had broken out or been freed from other prisons in Egypt and demanded that the prison authorities should also release them. The authorities refused and there was then rioting in the prison. In response, prison guards are alleged to have used tear gas against prisoners and excessive force, including lethal force using live ammunition. According to unofficial sources as many as 25 prisoners have been killed, possibly more, including nine inmates of the prison's Wing C ('anbar Geem), and 81 injured.

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the remaining prisoners, in view of the lethal force already used by prison guards, including particularly those already suffering from wounds and who are not receiving adequate treatment.

Prisoners and their families also report that the prison inmates are being denied adequate food, water and other basic necessities, and that this deprivation was especially acute in the period between 28 January, when the unrest began, and 7 February, when soldiers threw bread, jam and cheese to inmates over the prison wall.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Arabic or your own language:

- * Urging the authorities to immediately cease excessive force, including lethal force, against inmates of the prison and to ensure that all those injured receive adequate medical treatment without further delay;
- * Urging the authorities to order an immediate independent investigation into the disturbances at al-Qatta al-Gadeed prison to establish the circumstances in which prison guards used lethal force, to confirm and make public the number of prisoners killed and injured and their identities, and to ensure that any prison guards responsible for excessive force, unlawful killings or other abuses against prisoners are brought to justice;
- * Calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to ensure that all inmates of al-Qatta al-Gadeed prison are treated humanely and have access to adequate food, water and other necessities without discrimination;
- * Urging the authorities to allow all prisoners regular access to their families and lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 MARCH 2011 TO:

Leader, Supreme Military Council
Field Marshal Muhammad Tantawi
Ministry of Defence, 23 Al Khalifa Al Ma'moun Street, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 291 6227
Email: mod@idsc.gov.eg mmc@afmic.gov.eg, mod@afmic.gov.eg
Salutation: Dear Field Marshal

Minister of Interior
H.E. Mahmoud Wagdy
Ministry of Interior
25 El Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt.
Fax: +20 22 796 0682
Email: moi@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prosecutor General
Abd El-Megeed Mahmoud
Dar al-Qadha al-'Ali
Ramses Street, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20 22 577 4716
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

EGYPTENS AMBASSAD
BOX 14230
104 40 STOCKHOLM
FAX 08-661 26 64
E-post: embassyofegypt@telia.com

Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to sources at the prison, al-Qatta al-Gadeed prison has four wings, including Wing C, three of which are used to hold prisoners sentenced for criminal offences, with the fourth used to hold detainees awaiting trial.

No prisoners are reported to have escaped from al-Qatta al-Gadeed prison although the civilian and security staff who administered the prison under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, are reported to have left their posts at the prison on 28 January, with the exception of watchtower guards who remained in position.

Wing C ('anbar Geem) is reported to accommodate hundreds of prisoners but the only medical care currently being provided, according to information obtained by Amnesty International, is being provided by an inmate who is a pharmacist. He has been reportedly cleaning prisoners' wounds with Betadine, an antiseptic solution that kills bacteria, and had been using torn pieces of underwear to bind prisoners' wounds because there are no bandages.

The pharmacist prisoner is said to be treating prisoners suffering from wounds caused by live bullets and others who were struck by lead pellets fired from shotguns and to be doing so without antibiotics. He is said to be caring for around 45 injured prisoners in Wing C, while dozens of other prisoners are reported to be suffering from injuries in the three other wings of the prison.

Other inmates are reported to suffer from diabetes and to be in urgent need of insulin, supplies of which from the prison clinic have now run out, and others need urgent treatment for liver and kidney complaints.

Prisoners have told Amnesty International that watchtower guards fired at prisoners while they were still inside their prison wings and cells, and when they were in the prison yard, and that there are bullet holes on inside doors and cell walls.

According to the prisoners, an inmate named Ahmed Magdi Mursi was killed on 11 February while he was standing with others inside his wing. Another prisoner who spoke to Amnesty International said he was injured on 12 February when prison guards shot at him and five other prisoners who were carrying the body of Ahmed Magdi Mursi to hand it over to members of his family who were waiting outside the prison gate.

"A security officer told us to place the body, which was covered in blankets, near the gate. And the army soldiers positioned outside the prison told us to go back. But the security officer had a higher rank so we continued moving forward near the gate when someone opened fire. We dropped the body and ran for our lives. I was injured in my left shoulder; a prisoner from another wing who was helping us was killed after receiving two bullets in his stomach and another two were injured."

Family visits resumed on 9 February with restrictions but only one family member is permitted to enter the prison at a time, and this has also been disrupted after two more inmates were killed at the prison last weekend.