

Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.

The University of Arizona · 1232 North Cherry Avenue · Tucson, Arizona 85721

May 5, 1995

His Excellency Muhammad Husni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Qasr Abdin
Cairo, Egypt

Your Excellency:

The Committee on Academic Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa of the Middle East Studies Association of North America is concerned about the arrest and treatment of Basil Ramsis, a 22-year-old student at `Ayn Shams University. Ramsis was arrested on March 25, 1995 at the `Ayn Shams University campus, apparently by an undercover agent of the State Security Investigations Department (Mabahith Amn al-Dawla), posing as a student.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2400 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

While he was being arrested, Ramsis was allegedly severely beaten and dragged on the ground. He was then put in a black unmarked police car and transferred to the SSI headquarters in Lazoughli (Cairo). During this transfer the SSI officers and men in the car undressed him, blindfolded him with his own sweatshirt and beat him with handguns, although he was clearly wounded and bleeding from the nose and mouth. While he was unlawfully detained at the SSI headquarters in Lazoughli, Ramsis was again allegedly beaten, including being dragged by his feet up several flights of stairs, beaten all the while with a solid instrument. As a result of his injuries, Basil was taken by the SSI to Al-Azhar University Hospital for treatment and later returned to SSI headquarters where he was interrogated and held until the morning of 26 March. On 26 March Ramsis was taken for questioning before a prosecution attorney. The minutes of his questioning by the prosecution include a full record of his torture and of his injuries. Despite Ramsis' request that his account of the beatings be verified by a forensic medical examination, the prosecution did not order an examination.

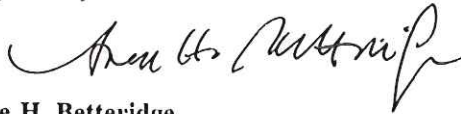
Ramsis was one of 45 individuals, 26 of them students, arrested for participating in peaceful protests against Israeli participation in the Cairo International Trade Fair (State Security Case 247 of 1995). While all the others were released as of April 6, 1995, Ramsis was kept in detention until April 17, 1995 on the grounds that he was charged with carrying a pistol. Witnesses to Ramsis's arrest have stated that they saw no pistol, and that Ramsis, who is very thin, could not have concealed a weapon in his clothing (t-shirt and jeans) as alleged by the arresting officers. Ramsis is a well known left-wing student activist, who has for several years been active in the Egyptian human rights movement with the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, the Egyptian branch of Amnesty International, and the Center for Human Rights Legal Aid.

Although Ramsis has been released, his case remains open, and the allegations concerning his beating and torture have not been investigated. Torturing students for their political opinions, and disruptions of peaceful expressions of opinion on a university campus constitute a serious violation of academic freedom. We are concerned that our colleagues in Egypt and their students be permitted to exercise their rights of freedom of expression within the university context, as this is essential to free inquiry and debate.

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We urge you to investigate the detention, beating and torture of Basil Ramsis, and to make it clear to the State Security Investigation Division that the alleged actions are violations of both Egyptian law and international human rights standards.

Respectfully,



Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: Hasan al-Alfi, Minister of the Interior
Raga' al-'Arabi, Prosecutor General
Ambassador Ahmed Mahir, Embassy of Egypt