

PRISONERS OF FAITH CAMPAIGN PACK



Muslim Brotherhood - Khairat Al-Shater

WARNING: Some of the contents of this report deal with torture and may cause distress

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Islamic Human Rights Commission
Web: www.ihrc.org
E-mail: info@ihrc.org
Telephone: (+44) 20 8904 4222
Fax: (+44) 20 8904 5183

“Treat people like trees, when they throw stones at us, we will respond with fruits.”¹

“...we would like our people to know also that we love them more than ourselves and that we wish to sacrifice our souls for their honour, glory, dignity, religion and their aspirations, we work for people only for God's sake more than we work for ourselves; we are for- our beloved brothers - and we will never be against you.”²

Imam Hassan al Banna
(Founder of Muslim Brotherhood)

¹ Mahdi Akef, Mohamed. “Statement from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 26 Feb 2007: 4. Ikhwan Press.

² *ibid*

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Khairat Al-Shater

Introduction

Assalaam alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh

Dear Brothers and Sisters

It has been estimated that there are approximately 250,000 Muslim prisoners of faith around the world today, held in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. They can be politicians, members of human rights organisations, students, writers, actors and indeed come from all spheres of life, but have one thing in common in that they have wished to adhere to the Islamic belief and way of life. The government of the country where the prisoners of faith are held often portrays them as terrorists, inciters of religious hatred or of even trying to change the constitution of the country. Once locked away, it is all too easy to forget about these prisoners of faith, who can be subjected to the most extreme and brutal forms of torture. Despite the various human rights treaties which have been ratified by governments to protect the right of an individual not to be subjected to torture and the countless UN resolutions banning its use, this practice still continues, largely ignored by the international community. The right not to be tortured is non-derogable, meaning in all situations even in a state of emergency this right must be guaranteed.

IHRC's prisoner of faith campaigns have been running since the organisation began and continue and complement the work of many dedicated campaigns world-wide. More packs will be made available. Please check our website and go to the campaigns page at www.ihrc.org.uk or contact us via email at info@ihrc.org.

The Letter Writing Campaign

IHRC's campaign for prisoners of faith is based on a letter writing campaign. We have found this to be an effective method of applying pressure to different governmental organisations, (national and international), bodies such as the United Nations, European Commission of Human Rights and other similar organisations. They are currently failing to exert pressure on member countries which have pledged to uphold human rights values.

Questions that have been asked in the past concerning the campaign have included:

- What difference will one letter make?
- Does it really work?
- Will we get in trouble writing the letters, since *they* will have our contact details?

It is true that one letter may end up being ignored by the recipient. At least the person who sent it will be able to answer on the Day of Judgement that s/he made a stand against injustice to try to help the prisoners. However letters sent in their hundreds cannot be ignored. One MP stated that if his constituency receives even five letters on the same topic, a meeting is convened to answer the question at hand. Of course this may be the policy of one of the "better" MPs, but the fact remains that hundreds of letters demanding to know why a certain prisoner of faith is being detained and tortured for no other reason than wishing to practice his/her religion must generate a response which can then be taken further.

In fact it was due to a sustained letter writing campaign that the Turkish journalist Gul Aslan, held for three years without charge in Bandirma prison was released in August 1999; the judge

presiding over her trial stated that her case was an international embarrassment. Thousands of prisoners of faith have also been released in Bahrain, India and Nigeria after similar campaigns.

Huda Kaya, whilst held in Malatya Prison in July 1999, after participating in a rally against the hijab ban, wrote the following to IHRC:

“We are so proud to see that you are interested in the problems of Muslims in Turkey who are living the basic principle of Islam that only the momineen are brothers...Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a strong and compact wall (Surah Saff-4/Holy Qur’an)...And again by using IHRC, I am sending salaam to all those valuable momineen brothers and sisters. WE ARE WAITING FOR YOUR LETTERS.”

Al-Hamdullillah, Huda Kaya and her daughters who faced the death penalty for participating in the rally were released from prison in December 1999.

Many people do feel slightly apprehensive about writing letters to different governmental organisations about prisoners of faith. Letter writing is a tool widely used by human rights organisations and is a fundamental basic right aligned to freedom of speech.

Model letters are provided for each of the prisoners of faith, which can be sent directly or adjusted as necessary to include further details. We ask that if you do receive a reply to send **a copy of the letter sent (even if it is the model letter) and the reply to IHRC**. This is extremely important as it helps IHRC to monitor the situation with regards to the prisoner of faith and to improve upon the current model letters. Please also keep letters polite.

Letter writing campaigns take time to become established, but Insha’Allah further results will be obtained. However, the success of the campaign is dependent upon the number of people committing to it. More campaigners need to get involved, on a regular basis. The campaign can then be extended to include e.g. vigils and protests at different embassies to raise awareness and Insha’Allah obtain the release of the prisoner of faith.

Finally we ask you to remember these and the many thousand other prisoners of faith in your du’as – imprisoned simply for their beliefs.

Why Campaign with the Islamic Human Rights Commission?

As Muslims, we have an undeniable responsibility to struggle against oppression and injustice, and to work for a world based on principles of equity and compassion. To do so, Muslims must first of all be aware of the current state of affairs in the world at large, an obligation that has been indicated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as follows: “Whoever wakes up in the morning not thinking about the affairs of the Ummah (community) is not one of us.” (Muslim)

The Qur’an clearly points out that Muslims must fight against oppression in all forms, be it against Muslim or non-Muslim: “*And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men, women and children (of) those who say: Our Lord! Cause us to go forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper.*” (Qur’an 4:75) This verse shows that Muslims have a responsibility to aid the oppressed regardless of the faith or ethnicity of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Indeed, the Prophet (SAW) has clearly stated that refusing to struggle against oppression and injustice could be tantamount to becoming an oppressor and even exiting the fold of Islam. “Whoever goes along with an oppressor and strengthens his hands, knowing that he is an oppressor, has taken himself out of the fold of Islam.” (from ‘Aws ibn Sharahbil, by al-Bayhaqi in his *Shu’ab al-Iman*; cited in *Mishkat* (1381 AH), Vol. 2, p. 641:5136) “Whoever sees something wrong should use his strength to set it right; if he cannot, he should speak against it; and if he cannot it, he should at least consider it wrong in his heart; and this is the weakest of faith.” (Muslim, from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri, Vol. 1, p. 69:78, *Kitab al-Iman*)

Thus, it is clear that genuine adherence to Islam inherently entails committed activism against all forms of injustice and oppression. This includes standing up against those who perpetrate and promulgate injustice regardless of whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, and striving to protect the rights of all people from oppression once more regardless of ethnicity or religion.

The question then arises as to the best methodology we should implement to fulfil the obligation outlined above. Once more, the Qur’an and the Prophet (SAW) have made clear the best means of doing so. First of all, the Qur’an states that it is an obligation for Muslims to form groups or organisations through which they may exhort to what is right and denounce wrong: “*Let there be among you a group that invites to the good, enjoins what is right and forbids what is evil, and they are those who are successful.*” (Qur’an 3:104) In other words, Muslims should form structured organisations through which they can call upon all relevant parties to implement justice and avoid injustice - the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) strives to be just such an organisation. This is a universal obligation that Muslims have been commanded to fulfil by Allah (SWT) in relation to all individuals, communities and groups, both Muslim and non-Muslim without exception. This therefore necessarily includes calling on international organisations such as the United Nations and NATO; national organisations such as human rights groups and think-tanks; governments and non-governmental organisations; state and non-state institutions; and so on, to implement justice and avoid injustice. It is the obligation of Muslims to make significant contact with all such national and international bodies to encourage and exhort them to practice justice, and finally to denounce and condemn any of their unjust practices.

Indeed, the Prophet (SAW) has quite specifically highlighted the merits of speaking out directly to the perpetrator or supporter of oppression. This is done by condemning their oppressive behaviour, recommending to them the most just practice in relation to this behaviour, and calling upon them to reform their behaviour according to justice by implementing this recommendation.

The Prophet (SAW) stated: “The best Jihad is the word of truth spoken in the presence of a tyrant ruler” (narrated by Ahmad). Indeed, this sort of direct activism against oppression may not necessarily be literal and physical. Research and campaigning through writing in order to fulfil the obligation outlined above has also been highly praised by the Prophet (SAW), and therefore must include contacting relevant groups and organisations to demand that they adhere to justice. This has been directly alluded to in the statement of the Prophet (SAW) quoted above: “Whoever sees something wrong should use his strength to set it right; if he cannot, he should speak against it...”

The next question with regards to methodology is how to call upon these groups, bodies and organisations in an effective and convincing manner. It is well known that when the Prophets (AS) fulfilled their mission to preach the message of Islam to the different communities to which they came, they did so deliberately in a language and terminology which they could best understand. In other words, they gauged the intellectual and rational background of their listeners and tailored their preaching so that listeners were able to comprehend the Prophets’ message.

This has even entailed utilising the ideology of the listeners in such a way as to use the concepts and terminology which they are already familiar with, to prove a correct concept. For example, the Qur’an relates that Prophet Ibrahim (AS), in conversation with his people, utilised the concepts and terminology of the paganist worldview to prove the Islamic worldview. (*Qur’an* 6:75-79, 7:80-83, 41:47)

In a similar fashion, it is possible to highlight the unjust practices of governments, organisations and individuals using concepts and terminology that they understand - such as the prevailing human rights discourse - so as to prove their unjust nature. The objective of doing so would simply be to demonstrate their hypocrisy in failing to adhere to the very humanitarian principles which they themselves claim to uphold, by pointing out the discrepancy between their behaviour and the basic rights of human beings.

Where the Divinely-ordained rights of human beings correlate with rights recognised internationally, it makes sense to call upon national and international bodies to implement such rights. This would serve greatly to help fulfil our Islamic responsibility to struggle against global injustice and oppression, to protect the intrinsic rights of Muslims worldwide, and to promote justice and equity. In this way, we would be pressuring existing international instruments to act in accordance with justice. As the Prophet stated in a famous hadith: “The similitude of the believers is like a single body. If any part of it complains of an injury, the entire body responds.” Campaigning with IHRC can help make this response effective.

There are many examples proving that Muslim pressure can have an impact. For example, the Zionist Lord Michael Levy was temporarily sidelined from his position as Tony Blair’s Middle East envoy. This occurred in the wake of the Foreign Office having received up to over a thousand letters from IHRC campaigners. Lord Levy’s sidelining was widely reported in the press by newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Independent*. Although Lord Levy was later returned to his position, it remains clear that this sort of pressure can work.

Similarly, when a number of Turkish Sisters were jailed for undertaking a peaceful protest against the ban on Hijab in schools and universities, IHRC volunteers were asked to send letters to several organisations and leaders, including Mary Robinson, the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Turkish sisters, who had the death sentence levelled against them, were soon released when the UN intervened under pressure from IHRC campaigners to prevent them from being killed.

Another recent example is that of Oxfam, when it announced that it will not renew its contract with pro-Zionist Starbucks after immense pressure from various human rights groups led by IHRC.

Yet another example is that of the recent success in the case of Mirza Tahir Hussain whose imminent death sentence was commuted owing to great efforts by many governmental bodies and co-ordinated by IHRC.

There are many other examples. Campaigning can work if enough consistent, determined and widespread pressure can be imposed on political leaders and organisations. IHRC believes that it is our responsibility to call these leaders and organisations to account for their policies and actions, and to exhort them to act in accordance with justice.

Muslim Brotherhood – Khairat Al-Shater

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood – MB (*Ikhwan Al Muslimeen*) is one of the most influential Muslim organizations in the world with branches worldwide, including the Middle East, North Africa, USA, UK and South Asia. MB finds its roots in Egypt where its founder Hassan al Banna was born.

MB believes in achieving its objectives through reformist, educational and non-violent means. Ever since its inception in 1928 it has gained so much strength and popularity that it is now the most powerful opposition group in Egypt and hence it is and has always posed a big threat for the Egyptian regime. So much so that it has been banned since 1954 and great numbers of its members have been put behind bars; yet its popularity is still on the rise as is reflected from the country's parliamentary elections and support worldwide.

An incident on 10 December 2006 sparked the beginning of yet another massive wave of arrests against MB, which also targeted some of its key members including Khairat Al-Shater, deputy to MB's supreme guide.

For a brief history of MB, please refer to the MB History link on <http://www.ikhwanweb.com>

The Incident

On 10 December 2006, a group of students at Al Azhar University carried out a demonstration in the university premises. They all belonged to the Free Student Union which was formed in November 2005 and comprises of mostly MB members.³ Around 35 students carried out a karate and kung fu performance⁴, wearing black uniforms and 'balaclavas with *samidun* (the steadfast) written across them,⁵ to 'protest alleged government interference in student union elections.'⁶

According to MB, in these elections that were held in universities throughout Egypt, many of its student members were 'prevented from running for the student unions, and those whose nominations were accepted, their names were struck off before the beginning of the elections...'⁷ Consequently, only those students were allowed to participate who were permitted by the security. Many students held their own parallel elections as they felt they could not trust the elections conducted under university supervision. At Ain Shams University a number of MB students participating were allegedly beaten by unknown armed men, in the presence of the university guards who did not intervene.⁸ Many MB students were injured and sent to hospital. Further, many of other Free Student Union members were subjected to disciplinary action, and

³ "Egypt: Police Intensify Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood." [Human Rights News](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm). 18 Dec 2006. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm>>.

⁴ Mahdi Akef, Mohamed. "Statement from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt." [Ikhwan Message Newsletter](#). 26 Feb 2007: 3. Ikhwan Press.

⁵ "Egypt: Police Intensify Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood." [Human Rights News](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm). 18 Dec 2006. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm>>.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Mahdi Akef, Mohamed. "Statement from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt." [Ikhwan Message Newsletter](#). 26 Feb 2007: 4. Ikhwan Press.

⁸ El-Sayed, Mohamed. "Campus Confrontations." [Al-Ahram Weekly Online](#). Issue No 822. Egypt. 30 Nov – 6 Dec 2006. Al-Ahram. <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/822/eg6.htm>>.

some were dismissed from their universities for a month. These incidents lead to the protests staged by the students on 10 December 2006.

Photos from the incident created apprehension in the media that MB was making a claim 'to form a military wing'⁹ and that the students were part of this secret militia. Police began investigating the incident.

MB leaders expressed clear disapproval of the students' demonstration and 'personally chastised'¹⁰ them. They further stressed and clarified that MB is a peaceful organization and has no intentions of forming a militia.

The students also issued a statement in which they apologized to the university, professors and their colleagues,

“We apologize for this skit. This is not our way. It reflected poorly on our school and ourselves by making us look like a militia. This image is absolutely untrue. We are students. We did this skit because we felt that no one was listening...to our requests for justice in the university...The university administration, in cooperation with the security apparatus, has denied us our rights to participate in student union elections.”¹¹

The students distributed this statement to all newspapers and media outlets; however, most of them did not publish it and the campaign against MB continued widely in the media.

In spite of these statements, MB was accused of providing its student members with 'combat training, knives and chains'¹² and encouraging them to stage riots and demonstrations. Hence 17 influential MB leaders, including Khairat Al-Shater, were arrested on 14 December 2006, along with at least 140 students.

The Arrest

On 14 December 2006, a large police force was mobilized to arrest several MB members. The police officers blockaded the Nasr City district, Shater's home town, at around 3:00 am in order to arrest him.¹³ In addition they confiscated three computers, two mobile phones and 60, 000 Egyptian Pounds.¹⁴ They then went on towards one of the dormitories at Al Azhar university campus to arrest more than 140 students affiliated with MB. Several staff members at Al Azhar were also arrested.

All of the MB leaders and 19 of the MB students arrested were jailed. The police questioned Shater for several hours but he refused to answer any questions, 'challenging the legitimacy of

⁹ “Egypt: Police Intensify Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood.” Human Rights News, 18 Dec 2006. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm>>.

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² “Muslim Brotherhood Members to be Tried by Court known for Swift Trials with no Appeals.” International Herald Tribune – Africa and Middle East, 6 Feb 2007. The Associated Press. <<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/06/africa/ME-GEN-Egypt-Muslim-Brotherhood.php>>.

¹³ “Police Arrests Khyrat El Shatter, MB Deputy Chairman.” MB News, 14 Dec 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5882>>.

¹⁴ Essam El-Din, Gamal. “Unmasked Condemnation.” Al-Ahram Weekly Online, Issue No 825. Front Page. 21 Dec – 27 Dec 2006. Al-Ahram. <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/825/fr2.htm>>.

investigating...him.’¹⁵ He further stated that this arrest is ‘politically motivated and aims at distorting the group’s image and its national role.’¹⁶

Human Rights Watch (HRW) condemned the arrests and stated:

“If there is evidence that anyone detained has committed an offence beyond belonging to the Brotherhood, the government should bring charges before an independent court and produce the evidence. If not, the authorities must release the detainees immediately.”¹⁷

The International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO) denounced these arrests as well and stated that all students have a right to express their views peacefully and to contest student union elections without any state intervention.

By detaining MB members, the government is violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Egypt is a party, which ‘upholds the right to freedom of association.’¹⁸

Hence, even though the government has faced much criticism over these arrests, it insists that this was a defensive move to prevent further such incidents in other campuses.

According to HRW, a student caught in a similar onslaught on MB in Munufiyya governorate in November 2006 had informed them that the ‘...police had tortured him with electrical currents, kept him blindfolded while he was in custody, and tried to force him to incriminate himself.’¹⁹ This report raises concerns about current detainees and their conditions.

MB’s Statement Regarding the Arrest

Soon after the arrests, MB’s chairman, Mohamed Mahdi Akef issued a statement, reiterating the society’s mission statement to clarify that MB has no involvement in terrorism. He stated:

“We adopt a gradual, peaceful approach for reform which is based on Islam, and is concerned with building up the human being [and] the family [and reforming]...the society including all its political, economic, social, cultural and educational aspects...We believe reform should be based on moral principles in all aspects of life [i.e.]...truthfulness, honesty, fairness, integrity, sacrifice and faithfulness should be the mainstay of any activity in addition to freedom, justice, equality and truth. Therefore, we have declared that we believe that the people must be the source of authorities and that we believe in political plurality, the right to form parties, a peaceful circulation of power, integrity of elections, judicial independence, separation between powers, press freedom,

¹⁵ Mahmoud, Abd Mon’em. “MB Deputy Chief, 139 Members Jailed 15 Days Pending Trial.” *MB News*. 17 Dec 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwan.tv/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5893>>.

¹⁶ Abbady, S. “Al Shater, MB Leaders to State Security Prosecution on Saturday.” *MB News*. 22 Dec 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5930>

¹⁷ “Egypt: Police Intensify Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood.” *Human Rights News*. 18 Dec 2006. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm>>.

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *ibid*

and we completely rejected the use of violence and terrorism as a method to achieve political or any other targets.”²⁰

He also stated that MB has always endeavored to work for the welfare of the society and has always displayed honesty and integrity while taking part in political activities; hence it has won over the trust of the Egyptian people. He said that MB is willing to hold dialogue with the government and keen to work on the differences between them, “...we were and still are patient and tolerant, and we open our minds and hearts for dialogue, and reach out to others to cooperate concerning the common good and we have never thought about any retaliation.”²¹

MB believes that these recent arrests, followed by government raids on its publishing house and Islamic bookshops in the beginning of 2007, are part of the regime’s scheme to curb its rise.

About Khairat Al-Shater²²

Mohammed Khairat Saad Al-Shater is the deputy supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. He is seen as the main financier of the organization and its ‘chief strategist.’²³

Despite being a key member of the society, he is known to keep a low profile and according to MB, had no involvement in the students’ demonstrations held on 10 December 2006. Political analysts believe that Al-Shater was targeted because of his prominent position as a financier of the society and his strong ties with the US and British quarters.

In fact some analysts believe that it was MB’s recent decision to strengthen ties with the international community that sparked the recent tensions. According to an article published by Reuters, MB’s Executive Bureau has recently been leaning towards inculcating a better relationship with the international community. It has been ‘...advising the group to engage in direct dialogues with official and popular American quarters as well as negotiating with prominent officials in the US Embassy in Cairo through declared political channels as the group is careful that such meetings be held with knowledge of the state to avoid criticism.’²⁴ Al-Shater and other influential leaders in MB are strong proponents of this view and have often cited their own strong ties with international quarters.

Al-Shater was born in Dakahleya on 4 May 1950. He has a very strong educational background with a Masters degree in Construction Management, two Bachelors degrees in Civil Engineering and Anthropology, and several diploma degrees in Islamic Studies, Business Administration, Social Work and NGOs, and International Marketing.

²⁰ Mahdi Akef, Mohamed. “Statement from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 26 Feb 2007: 4. Ikhwan Press.

²¹ ibid

²² “Mohammed Khairat Saad Al-Shatter.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 26 Feb 2007: 42-43. Ikhwan Press. & Al-Doustour. “Why did the Regime Detain Khayrat Al Shater?” MB News. 22 Dec 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.
<<http://ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5935>>.

²³ “Egypt: Police Intensify Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood.” Human Rights News. 18 Dec 2006. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/18/egypt14890.htm>>.

²⁴ Al-Doustour. “Why did the Regime Detain Khayrat Al Shater?” MB News. 22 Dec 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.
<<http://ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5935>>.

Al-Shater's political career began as early as 1966 in secondary school when he joined the Socialist Youth Organization. He was a founding member of the General Islamic Action in 1967 in Alexandria where he played a pivotal role in bringing about Islamic awakening in the early Seventies. He continued with his political activities at Alexandria University with other student activists. In 1968, after participation in the famous student demonstrations that followed the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, he was imprisoned for four months and then dismissed from university. Soon after his release, he was drafted into the Army in the Red Sea town, a far-off area from Cairo and Alexandria.

Al-Shater became a member of MB in 1974. At the same time, he began working as an administrator in the Faculty of Engineering at Mansoura University. After graduation, he was appointed as a lecturer at the university. But that same year, President Sadat suspended him from working in the university and he was put on the list of those people who were wanted for detention. But by then he had travelled to London for his PhD. There his interests changed and he instead became involved in business activities, and hence from 1981 onwards he established his own business in different areas and companies. He started trading in garments, textiles and furniture amongst other items and eventually, prospering financially and supporting MB projects. He currently runs his private group of companies, in addition to being a board member in some major banks and other companies.

Al-Shater played a lead role in many MB affairs such as those of Education, Human Development and Management. He was elected as member of the MB Guidance Bureau in 1995. He was imprisoned several times during the rule of Mubarak and Nasser. In 1992 he was imprisoned for one year in the famous *Salsabeel* case, named after his computer company. Government security forces confiscated hundreds of CDs which allegedly contained MB's plans to overthrow the government.²⁵ In 1995 he was referred to a military court and sentenced to five years imprisonment, along with 54 other MB members who were sentenced from three to five years; he was released in July 2000. In 2001 he was imprisoned again for almost one year.

Al-Shater has travelled to many countries regarding MB missions, including Arab, Asian and European countries.

As one of the most prominent figures in MB, Al-Shater is known for his 'moderate views on issues like...relationship with the West...succession of power and...MB's relationship with the regime in general.'²⁶ To demonstrate his balanced viewpoint regarding '...the relationship between Islamists and the West he published an interview entitled 'We do not promote an anti-Western agenda'' on Ikhwan Web, the official MB website. He stated in one of his answers,

“We believe that the dialogue with the west is the ideal method to bridge the dividing gaps and resolve all grievances. In this regard, we welcome a constructive dialogue that promotes rapprochement among civilizations to avoid an imminent clash. It is evident that there are a few on both sides of the isle who are working to trigger a confrontation among different cultures and civilizations. Therefore, the ultimate humane interest necessitates that we reinforce dialogue and promote peaceful coexistence amongst people of different races, cultures, and origins on the bases of mutual respect and equality, recognizing the distinctive and private ethnic features which makes each culture unique

²⁵ “An Orderly Shift.” Al-Ahram Weekly Online. Issue No 675. Egypt. 29 Jan – 4 Feb 2006. Al-Ahram. <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/675/eg2.htm>>.

²⁶ El-Hodeibi, Ibrahim. “A Week of Escalation: The MB and Al Azhar Demonstrations.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 26 Feb 2007: 20-21. Ikhwan Press.

and creative. The Qur'an says "And we set you up as nations and tribes so that you may be able to recognize each other" (*Al-Hujrat*: 13)"²⁷

Further, to clarify issues raised against MB by the regime which considers the society a political threat, al Shater wrote an article for the *Guardian*, titled 'No Need to Be Afraid of Us.' He states,

"...in spite of the confidence the Egyptian people have in us, we are not seeking more than a small piece of the parliamentary cake...What we want to do instead is trigger a renaissance in Egypt, rooted in the religious values upon which Egyptian culture and society is built; for we believe these values can effectively deal with the obstacles that have hindered reform and development...

"...Not a single political, religious, social or cultural group should be excluded from Egypt's political life. The objective must be to end the monopoly of government by a single party and boost popular engagement in political activity...to remove restrictions imposed by the regime on political activity and give the parliament a much bigger say than it has now...reforms can take place only once the grip of the state executive is regulated by an independent legislature and independent judiciary."²⁸

Prison Conditions

Al-Shater and the rest of the MB detainees were initially held at the Al- Mahkoum prison in Cairo²⁹, which is a 'high security prison' for criminals. The cells are 3 x 8 meters in size where 17 detainees were forced to sleep on the floor. They were all denied blankets and medicines. The cells were only opened for 90 minutes every day.

Due to the poor prison conditions, Al-Shater's health greatly deteriorated in prison. According to his daughter Zahra Khairat Al-Shater, who has regularly been visiting him, Al-Shater had trouble breathing properly in prison due to the poor ventilation and high levels of humidity. Cigarette smoke also worsened his health, as he was made to stay with many offenders who smoke. Zahra Al-Shater has appealed to human rights organizations for the release of her father and her husband who is also detained, from prison. She stated that her father was continuously coughing one time she visited him.³⁰

Further, according to his doctor, Al-Shater, who suffers from 'uncontrolled diabetes, high blood pressure, chronic bronchial asthma, thyroid gland disorder, and coronary artery disease'³¹, requires on-hand medical attention. However initially, Al-Shater was denied medical facilities in the prison. The State Security Police which supervise political prisoners refused to allow blood sugar and blood pressure machines in the prison to monitor his health. His doctor further added that before his arrest, Al-Shater was scheduled to undergo cardiac catheterization to examine his

²⁷ "El-Shater: We do not Promote an Anti Western Agenda." *MB News*. 14 March 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=4073>>

²⁸ El-Shater, Khairat. "No Need to be Afraid of Us". Comment. *Guardian Unlimited*. 23 Nov 2005. Guardian News and Media Limited. 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1648455,00.html>>.

²⁹ "MB Detainees Moved to Torah Prison for Political Detainees." *MB News*. 21 Jan 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo. <

<http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6137>>

³⁰ "Al Shater's Daughter Appeals for her Father's and Husband's Release." *Ikhwan Message Newsletter*. 12 Jan 2007: 2-3. Ikhwan Press.

³¹ *ibid*

heart but this too has been delayed due to the arrest. Later, the police allowed access to his medicines but blankets and mattresses were still refused.

Initially there was also a restriction on family visits and Al-Shater's family was denied to visit him during the *Eid Al-Adha* holidays. Afterwards, they were allowed to visit him every week, but according to Zahra Al-Shater's statement, for each visit they would have to wait for 3 hours just to talk to him for half an hour.³²

On 21 January 2007, the detainees were shifted to Torah farm prison which houses political detainees.³³ According to a political observer this move signified that the government intended to detain the MB leaders for longer.³⁴

Detained MB Members' Assets are Frozen

For the initial few weeks, the state prosecution prolonged the imprisonment of the MB detainees on three successive occasions. In reaction to the extension of the prison sentence the third time on 24 January 2007, Abdul Moneim Abdul Maqsood, the MB lawyer, called it an oppressive decision as the MB members were not '...convicted in the investigations and that releasing them will not harm the course of investigations.'³⁵

On 28 January 2007, public prosecutor Abd al-Magid Mahmud ordered the assets of Al-Shater and those of 28 other members of the Muslim Brotherhood frozen on the grounds that they financed a banned organization.³⁶ Their wives' and children's' assets were also frozen.

The frozen assets have an estimated worth of \$300 million.³⁷ According to the International Herald Tribune, the regime is '...trying to dismantle...a financial network that feeds millions of dollars to the group through companies owned by wealthy members – everything from furniture stores to fast-food chains.'³⁸ Al-Shater, for example, is estimated to own around \$87 million, according to Adel Abdul Aleem, a former official in Egypt's state security office.³⁹ Donations are the second primary resource of funds, as each of its estimated 400,000 members donates 8 percent of his/her income to the society every month. The organization then invests these donations in '...apartment complexes, supermarket chains, textile factories and fast-food chains...', according to former MB members.⁴⁰

³² *ibid*

³³ "MB Detainees Moved to Torah Prison for Political Detainees." *MB News*, 21 Jan 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6137>

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ "Eng. Al Shater and 36 Others Jailed 15 More Days." *MB News*, 24 Jan 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6161>

³⁶ "Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Detainees Face Military Tribunals." *Human Rights News*, 15 Feb 2007. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/15/egypt15329.htm>>.

³⁷ Bishara, Dina and Hamzawy, Amr. "Burying Democracy Further in Egypt." *Ikhwan Message Newsletter*, 19 March 2007: 5-6. Ikhwan Press. Taken from The Daily Star Lebanon.

³⁸ "Egypt Steps Up Campaign Against Muslim Brotherhood." *International Herald Tribune – Africa and Middle East*, 20 Feb 2007. The Associated Press. <<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/20/africa/ME-GEN-Egypt-Hunting-The-Brotherhood.php>>.

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ *ibid*

Political analyst, Amr el Choubaki, commented that this move by the government is ‘...an independent course that targets blockading the Muslim Brotherhood’s economic capabilities.’⁴¹ Other analysts however believe that this onslaught will not do much damage owing to MB’s decentralized functioning.⁴²

The Egyptian National Committee for Defending Prisoners of Opinion and Freedoms deemed this move of the government to be oppressive and a sign of discouragement for foreign investors to the country. It stated that this

“...measure is contradicting with the country's policy which is based on free economy encouraging investment... [it is]...an attempt to scare and drive investors and businessmen out...”⁴³

By doing so, the government has demonstrated that it can override the constitution and the law at its own will. But according to an internal study carried out by Egypt’s Stock Exchange Authority, this move will only hurt the Egyptian economy. Dr. Ayman Rajab, a stock exchange expert commented on the study stating that “...random detentions against Islamic businessmen...may lead to a disastrous relapse in the performance of the Egyptian stock exchange...”⁴⁴

MB Members Referred to Military Tribunal

On 29 January 2007, after having interrogated the accused, the Cairo Criminal Court issued a ruling to immediately release Al-Shater and the other MB members, as there was no evidence against the detainees and hence extension of the detention period was not justified.

A memo issued by the Appeals Court regarding the MB detainees stated that no relationship between the accused and the Al Azhar University students existed, that all charges against the detainees were unjustified and that the exceptional detention was also unjustified especially ‘...in light of the accused being of good standing and individuals of high positions and renowned personal records...’⁴⁵ The judge specifically called on the government to respect the ruling.

However, the Egyptian Interior Ministry refused to accept this court decision.⁴⁶ Instead it issued fresh warrants against the MB detainees and they were all re-arrested immediately. This act of the government shows blatant disobedience of the judiciary’s decision. According to Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director for HRW,

“Re-arresting these men moments after their acquittal shows a complete contempt for the rule of law and shocking disrespect for the court. This escalation in the crackdown on the

⁴¹ “Crackdown on MB Business, Will Hurt Economy, Experts Warn.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 26 Feb 2007: 26-27. Ikhwan Press.

⁴² Shahine, Alaa. “Egypt Shifts its Strategy in Tackling Brotherhood.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 6 Feb 2007: 4-5. Ikhwan Press. Article by Reuters.

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ “Crackdown on MB Business, Will Hurt Economy, Experts Warn.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 26 Feb 2007: 26-27. Ikhwan Press.

⁴⁵ “Egypt’s Criminal Court Ruling Overturns Detention of MB Leaders.” MB News, 27 Feb 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?ID=6472&Lang=E&Press=Show&System=PressR&zPage=Systems>>.

⁴⁶ “MB’s Al Shater, Others Still Detained Despite Court Ruling.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 5 Feb 2007: 3. Ikhwan Press.

Muslim Brotherhood has worrying implications for anyone who peacefully campaigns for change.”⁴⁷

“By trying to crush Egypt's largest opposition movement, the government has shown once again that it cannot tolerate any criticism”⁴⁸

On 6 February 2007, all the detained MB leaders, including Al-Shater, were ordered by President Hosni Mubarak to be tried in a military tribunal.⁴⁹ This has been possible because of the Emergency Law, in function since 1981, which ‘authorizes the president to refer civilians to military trials.’⁵⁰ By subjecting MB members to military courts, the Egyptian government is violating Article 14⁵¹ of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This article necessitates that people ‘charged with criminal offenses have the right to a fair trial.’⁵²

Many human rights groups including HRW have spoken against the Emergency Law. A press release issued by HRW states that,

‘The law gives the authorities extensive powers to suspend basic liberties including:

- Arresting suspects at will and detaining them without trial for prolonged periods
- Referring civilians to military or exceptional state security courts whose procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial;
- Prohibiting strikes, demonstrations and public meetings,
- Censoring or closing down newspapers in the name of national security.’⁵³

Further, the Emergency Law does not contain any clause which would ‘oblige the rulings issued by the military tribunals to be supervised by a Higher Court to observe a right [sic] application of the law.’⁵⁴ Nor does it define ‘a maximum period of provisional detention.’⁵⁵

Two human rights organizations in Egypt, namely the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and the Arab Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, have issued a formal statement against this recent court martial order against MB members, stating that the military courts have been known for:

“...violating the defendant’s right to prepare his defense, violating the...[right of the defence to know]...the case files and meeting clients privately, and not taking into consideration torturing the defendants...[further] the military courts are exceptional courts for civilians, because their rulings can’t be challenged in...any other court, and their rulings aren’t supervised by any higher court to...[observe]...the right application of

⁴⁷ “Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Detainees Face Military Tribunals.” Human Rights News, 15 Feb 2007. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/15/egypt15329.htm>>.

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. OCHR 1996 – 2006. <<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm#art14>>.

⁵² “Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Detainees Face Military Tribunals.” Human Rights News, 15 Feb 2007. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/15/egypt15329.htm>>.

⁵³ “Egypt’s Emergency Without End.” Human Rights News, 25 Feb 2003. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/press/2003/02/egypt022503.htm>>.

⁵⁴ Abbadi, Al Sayyed. “Egyptian Military Tribunals, Long History of Human Rights Violations.” MB News, 10 Feb 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwan.tv/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6306>>.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

law; these rulings are only ratified by the president who is also the supreme commander of the armed forces or any authorized military officer.”⁵⁶

Further, military tribunals are known for their quick trials and not giving the defence enough time to prepare for the case. The military officers who are part of the tribunal are not obligated to possess a legal license. Also, the judge is only appointed for two years and can be dismissed any time.

Recent Egyptian history has proven that the law has been exploited many times and military trials have been used against political detainees to serve the government’s purpose. Beginning from 1995, seven military trials have been held against MB members. The following table⁵⁷ provides the details:

	Case	Ruling Date	Number of Defendants	Convicted	Acquitted	Notes
1	8/1995	22 Nov 1995	49	24	15	Sentenced 3-5 yrs
2	11/1995	22 Nov 1995	22	20	12	Sentenced 3-5 yrs
3	12/1995	20 Nov 1995	3	2	1	Sentenced 15 yrs
4	5/1996	14 Aug 1996	13	8	5	Sentenced 1-3 yrs
5	18/1999	9 Nov 2000	20	15	5	Sentenced 3-5 yrs
6	29/2001	20 July 2002	22	16	6	Sentenced 3-5 yrs
7	963/2006	6 Feb 2007	44			Tribunal still continues
	Total		180	95	55	

Analysts believe that this is a move to curb MB’s popularity in Egypt. According to President Hosni Mubarak, MB is a threat to ‘Egypt’s security and economy.’⁵⁸ But as reflected by a recent Al Jazeera poll, 83% of the roughly 33,000 people who voted do not agree with Mubarak’s statement.⁵⁹

Mubarak Introduces Constitutional Amendments

⁵⁶ “Rights Organizations Reject Transferring Al Shater, MB Members to Military Courts.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 12 Feb 2007: 4. Ikhwan Press.

⁵⁷ Abbadi, Al Sayyed. “Egyptian Military Tribunals, Long History of Human Rights Violations.” MB News, 10 Feb 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo. <<http://www.ikhwan.tv/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6306>>.

⁵⁸ “Rights Organizations Reject Transferring Al Shater, MB Members to Military Courts.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 12 Feb 2007: 4. Ikhwan Press.

⁵⁹ “Al Jazeera Poll: Muslim Brotherhood No Threat to Egypt’s Security.” Ikhwan Message Newsletter, 5 Feb 2007: 1. Ikhwan Press.

This crackdown against MB has also been accompanied by Mubarak's proposal to make amendments to 34 Articles in the Egyptian Constitution in order to 'enhance democracy.'⁶⁰ The referendum regarding the proposed constitutional amendments was held recently and was approved by 75.9 percent of those who voted.⁶¹ The voter turn out was quite low, MB members boycotted the referendum altogether. MB is of the opinion that the results were rigged.

Some of the key amendments include introducing a formal ban on parties based on religion⁶², removing judicial supervision of elections⁶³ and replacing the Emergency Law with an 'anti-terror' legislation giving the '...security forces sweeping powers to detain suspects and restrict public gatherings.'⁶⁴

Regarding the changes in election rules many believe that it may '...legalize forging and rigging of elections.'⁶⁵ It may also prevent independent candidates from running. MB, which has been able to contest in parliament elections with its members running as independents, claims that the purpose of all these moves is to ensure safe transfer of power to Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak and to make it difficult for the society to participate in politics. Gamal Mubarak, however, has categorically denied any interest in becoming president.

Al-Shater commented saying, '...the regime is trying to hinder attempts made by the group to spread awareness among the public over upcoming constitutional amendments and obstruct group members from participating in *Shura* Council elections this spring.'⁶⁶ MB's Chairman, Mahdi Akef has stated that they will try to register as a legal political party for the first time in response to Mubarak's proposed amendments.⁶⁷

Many human rights organizations including many judges in Egypt as well as international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, have strongly condemned the new constitutional changes, specifically the 'anti-terror' amendment.

Eight such organizations specifically issued a statement in this regard voicing their fears that arresting and detaining civilians has become a powerful weapon adopted by the government to deal with opponents. The statement read, '...while we are about to enter into a new phase of constitutional amendments, which are approved only by the ruling party, and that will probably legalize the state of emergency by issuing "the anti-terrorism law", 2007 is expected to be full of protests and accordingly full of repression, detentions and torture.'⁶⁸

⁶⁰ England, Andrew and Saleh, Heba. "Mubarak Steps up Fight on Muslim Brotherhood." Financial Times: Middle East and North Africa. 30 Jan 2007. <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/f01be7c4-b005-11db-94ab-0000779e2340.html>>.

⁶¹ "Divisive Egypt Reforms Approved." BBC News. 27 March 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6498573.stm>.

⁶² England, Andrew and Saleh, Heba. "Mubarak Steps up Fight on Muslim Brotherhood." Financial Times: Middle East and North Africa. 30 Jan 2007. <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/f01be7c4-b005-11db-94ab-0000779e2340.html>>.

⁶³ "Divisive Egypt Reforms Approved." BBC News. 27 March 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6498573.stm>.

⁶⁴ Michael, Maggi. "Group Blasts Mubarak's Anti Terror Bill." Guardian Unlimited. 17 March 2007. Guardian News and Media Limited. 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/story/0,-6487858,00.html>>.

⁶⁵ "Egyptian Judges: Proposed Constitutional Amendments Create Repressive, Autocratic Atmosphere." Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 19 March 2007: 4-5. Ikhwan Press.

⁶⁶ Halawi, Jailan. "The Politics of Cash." Al-Ahram Weekly Online. Issue No 830. Front Page. 1 – 7 Feb 2007. Al-Ahram. <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/830/fr3.htm>>.

⁶⁷ "Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Detainees Face Military Tribunals." Human Rights News. 15 Feb 2007. Human Rights Watch. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/02/15/egypt15329.htm>>.

⁶⁸ "Human Rights Organizations Condemn Government Crackdown on Opposition." Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 26 Feb 2007: 27. Ikhwan Press.

Amnesty International called the ‘anti-terror’ provision “...the greatest erosion of rights in 26 years.”⁶⁹ The group further stated that the amendments “...write into the permanent law emergency-style powers that have been used to violate human rights over more than two decades. The parliament should not rubber stamp this.”⁷⁰

Military Trial: First Session

The Cairo criminal court acquitted Al-Shater and 11 other MB leaders on 24 April 2007 for the second time in response to an appeal filed by the detainees’ families and overruled the state prosecutor’s decision to freeze the detainees’ assets.⁷¹ However, the Interior Ministry did not carry out the acquittal decision. Instead, the government ordered the military trials of all the detained MB leaders to begin on 26 April 2007.

Political analysts believe that the government’s sudden move indicates that “...the government is planning to ‘wrap up’ the trials quickly and slap the defendants with 5-10 years prison times.”⁷²

This military trial, in which Al-Shater is the chief defendant, is one of the biggest trials against MB. The first session of the trial was held in absolute secrecy and security. The defendants were suddenly informed that their trial will be held on 26 April. There was no public announcement of the trial date. Media access to the trial was restricted. Defence lawyers were not informed of the trial hence they boycotted the court session in protest. Thus the defendants were compelled to defend themselves.

According to Ikhwan Web all the defendants were given a chance to speak in which they all complained about the violation of their rights and protested against being referred to military court. They also called for an end to the involvement of the military in any political disagreements with the ruling party.⁷³ They argued that the charges against them were not investigated, and many of them did not even appear before the prosecution.

In total there were 40 defendants, 33 of which were present at the trial. They were charged by a panel of three judges with terrorism, money laundering and possession of documents propagating the organization’s ideas.⁷⁴ The defendants rejected the charges and said they will only respond in the presence of their lawyers. As regards the charge of money laundering, the prosecution acknowledged that the report on money laundering had not yet been presented to them by the bank. This shows that the defendants had been charged, their accounts had been frozen and their companies were shut down without any evidence.

⁶⁹ Michael, Maggi. “Group Blasts Mubarak’s Anti Terror Bill.” Guardian Unlimited. 17 March 2007. Guardian News and Media Limited. 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,,6487858,00.html>>.

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ “Second Time: Criminal Court Acquits Al Shater, 11 Others.” MB News. 24 April 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=7036>>.

⁷² “Military Trial for MB Leaders to Begin Tomorrow April 26.” MB News. 25 April 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=7044>>.

⁷³ “IkhwanWeb’s Coverage of the April 26th MB Military Trial Session.” MB News. 1 May 2007. The Muslim Brotherhood. Ikhwan Web, Cairo.

<<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=7105>>.

⁷⁴ “Egypt Begins Military Trial of 40 Leading Brotherhood Members Open.” International Herald Tribune – Africa and Middle East, 26 April 2007. The Associated Press. <<http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2007/04/26/africa/ME-GEN-Egypt-Brotherhood-Trial.php>>.

The trial lasted for three hours and was then adjourned till 3 June 2007.⁷⁵

Current Conditions

Meanwhile, the regime continues to arrest and detain more MB members. As of February 15 around 300 MB members were in prison since the students' incident of 10 December 2006.⁷⁶ Recently, Egyptian security forces arrested 78 members in what appeared to be 'an attempt to cripple the group ahead of April elections for the upper house of Egypt's parliament. Most of those arrested were potential candidates. In all, a total of about 300 members are in custody.'⁷⁷

The *Shura* Council elections for the upper house of the parliament have now been scheduled to begin in mid-May in which 20 MB candidates will contest despite the current tensions. Regarding the elections Abdel Moneim Abul Fatouh, a leading MB member, commented "We hope the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) and the government will see the Brotherhood's decision not as a sign of defiance, but as the expression of a sincere wish to compete in fair elections."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ibid

⁷⁶ "Egyptian Government Detains 81 MB Members for 15 Days." Ikhwan Message Newsletter. 26 Feb 2007: 32. Ikhwan Press.

⁷⁷ "Egypt Steps Up Campaign Against Muslim Brotherhood." International Herald Tribune – Africa and Middle East. 20 Feb 2007. The Associated Press. <<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/20/africa/ME-GEN-Egypt-Hunting-The-Brotherhood.php>>.

⁷⁸ Essam El-Din, Gamal. "Brothers Fight On." Al-Ahram Weekly Online. Issue No 841. Egypt. 19 – 25 April 2007. Al-Ahram. <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/841/eg5.htm>>.

Address for letters of support to Khairat Al-Shater

Egypt
Cairo – Turah
Turah Jail

Please note that your letters may not be delivered to Khairat Al-Shater due to increased security, however, we still encourage you to write to him to pressurize the Egyptian authorities and to show support for the detained MB members.

Instructions for Sending Model Letter

Please send the model letter with chosen insertions to the addresses below. Addresses for the recipients are given immediately after the model letters.

Model Letters for Khairat Al-Shater

1) Letter to UN Commissioner on Human Rights or Foreign Ministry in Your Country

Name
Address

Date

[Name of Recipient]
[Address of Recipient]

Dear [Name of Recipient]

Re: Muslim Brotherhood Members Detained

I am writing to you regarding Khairat Al-Shater and several other Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leaders and members detained in Egypt since 14 December 2006. Mr Al-Shater and the rest of the MB leaders are known for their good standing and reputable position in Egyptian society.

Mr Al-Shater was arrested along with other MB members after some students, affiliated to the society, staged a demonstration at Al Azhar University to protest against government interference in student elections.

The Cairo Criminal Court found no evidence of terrorism against the detainees and ordered their immediate release. The Egyptian Interior Ministry overruled the court decision and rearrested all the acquitted MB members. Thereafter, the state security prosecutor ordered the assets of all the detained leaders and their families to be frozen. A few days later, President Mubarak ordered the detainees to be tried in a military tribunal. This is not the first time that civilians in Egypt are being tried in a military court for non-military related charges.

As Egypt is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it is obliged to provide freedom of expression and association to its civilians and uphold the rights of the detainees. Yet, the regime is known for its suppression of political expression. Under the Emergency Law, the President has the authority to arrest suspects at will, detain them without trial for prolonged periods and refer civilians to military courts whose procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial. The recent constitutional amendments give additional powers to the regime to tighten its control over Egyptian society and restrict freedom further.

[INSERT APPROPRIATE PARAGRAPH]

Further, I request you to make representations to the Egyptian authorities to respect international human rights standards and to provide all citizens and opposition parties with their full civil rights, including the rights of freedom of expression and association.

I look forward to an early reply.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

Insertions

Recipient Name: Ms Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights

INSERTION

Please ensure the appropriate working groups in your office act upon this matter and work for the release of Khairat Al-Shater and all other MB political prisoners in Egypt.

Recipient Name: Foreign Ministry in Your Country

INSERTION

Please make representations on behalf of Khairat Al-Shater and the rest of the MB detainees. Your department has committed itself to promoting human rights and in this circumstance there has been a clear travesty of justice, where the detainees' human rights have been abused.

2) Letter to Egyptian Embassy in your Country

Name

Address

Date

[Name of Recipient]

[Address of Recipient]

Dear [Name of Recipient]

Re: Muslim Brotherhood Members Detained

I am writing to you regarding Khairat Al-Shater and several other Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leaders and members detained in Egypt since 14 December 2006. Mr Al-Shater and the rest of the MB leaders are known for their good standing and reputable position in Egyptian society.

Mr Al-Shater was arrested along with other MB members after some students, affiliated to the society, staged a demonstration at Al Azhar University to protest against government interference in student elections.

The Cairo Criminal Court found no evidence of terrorism against the detainees and ordered their immediate release. The Interior Ministry overruled the court decision and rearrested all the acquitted MB members. Thereafter, the state security prosecutor ordered the assets of all the detained leaders and their families to be frozen. A few days later, President Mubarak ordered the detainees to be tried in a military tribunal. This is not the first time that civilians in Egypt are being tried in a military court for non-military related charges.

Your country is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it is obliged to provide freedom of expression and association to its civilians and uphold the rights of the detainees. Yet, political expression is routinely suppressed in Egypt. Under the Emergency Law, the President has the authority to arrest suspects at will, detain them without trial for prolonged periods and refer civilians to military courts whose procedures are not in accordance with international standards for fair trial. The recent constitutional amendments give additional powers to the government to tighten its control over the society and restrict freedom further.

I request you to work for the immediate release of Khairat Al-Shater and the other MB detainees.

Further, I request you to ensure that international human rights standards are respected in your country and that all citizens and opposition parties are provided with their full civil rights, including the rights of freedom of expression and association.

I look forward to an early reply.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

Addresses for Khairat Al-Shater Model Letters

- Ms Louise Arbour
UN High Commissioner on Human Rights
Petitions Team
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Fax: + 41 22 917 9022 (particularly for urgent matters)
Email: tb-petitions@ohchr.org

- For UK Residents:
Ms. Margaret Beckett MP
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Fax: +44 20 7839 2417
Email private.office@fco.gov.uk

- For UK Residents:
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
HE Mr Gehad Refaat Madi
26 South Street
London W1K 1DW

Fax: +44 20 7491 1542
Email: etembuk@hotmail.com