

TORTURE IN EGYPT:

**A PERSONAL STATEMENT BY
DR. MOHAMED MOSTAFA MANDOUR**

Dr. Mohamed Mandour, an Egyptian medical doctor and psychiatrist, was administratively detained by the Egyptian security authorities for sixteen days in February 1991. He was brought from his home after midnight to State Security Intelligence headquarters at Lazoughly, Cairo. He was held there for ten days, from the early morning hours of February 8 until the morning of February 17. He was never charged with an offense.

After his release from detention, Dr. Mandour, who has served since 1989 on the Board of Trustees of the independent Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, prepared the attached report about his torture and mistreatment at Lazoughly by State Security Intelligence officers and guards. He never saw these individuals because he was continuously blindfolded from the moment he entered the intelligence headquarters until the end of his ordeal.

Dr. Mandour was never examined for signs of torture by state forensic doctors, despite repeated requests. The Egyptian government claims that Dr. Mandour's allegations of torture are unfounded. Official legal complaints about his torture submitted to the authorities by Egyptian lawyers have gone unanswered, as has Middle East Watch's February 1991 letter to Egyptian President Mubarak requesting information about the investigation of the allegations.

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Dr. Mandour was born in 1948 in Cairo and graduated from Ain Shams University Faculty of Medicine in 1973. He is the director of the psychiatric unit of Palestine Hospital in Cairo, which is owned by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. He has been a member of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights since 1985.

Dr. Mandour's report was translated by Middle East Watch from the Arabic original. The ellipses in the text appear in the original document and do not indicate the deletion of material.

To the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights

A Report about My Experience with the Security Apparatus at Lazoughly Building from the Evening of February 7, 1991 until My Transfer to Abu Za'bal Detention on the Morning of February 17, 1991

Before midnight on February 7, 1991 ... I was chatting with a physician and a colleague in my house ... There was no one else in the house except my 76-year-old mother. My mother opened the door and was surprised by a number of strange men, two of them in plainclothes and a number in police military fatigues ... The leader of the two in plainclothes introduced himself with utmost politeness as Lt. Col. 'Ali Abdul Fattah of State Security Intelligence. After the search, he asked me to accompany him ... I asked him: Is it merely a summons to the State Security or a detention? He told me it is a detention and I can bring some clothes I asked: Is there a prosecution warrant? He said no and that I will be detained on the basis of a detention order. Both of the intelligence officers presented themselves in a calm manner and carried out a thorough search without damaging anything or any disturbance of my elderly mother. He put all the papers which he gathered from my office in front of me in a large envelope and, truthfully, he was honest, he was even kind, to the extent that I thanked him after we left the house, despite my absolute astonishment about the circumstances and the reasons for my sudden detention.

On the way, the officer from Central Security put me between him and the driver in the cabin of a huge Central Security lorry in which there were policemen ... He also was extremely polite, lit a cigarette for me and apologized profusely about seeing me in this situation ... Before our arrival at the intelligence building in Lazoughly, he told me with profuse apology on Shaikh Rihan Street that I must be blindfolded before we entered the building ... He stopped and brought my suitcase, took a T-shirt out of it and, again politely, he asked me to tie it around my eyes.

I entered the intelligence building blindfolded and climbed a few steps to the left, holding my suitcase. I stopped for a moment and then someone pulled me to enter a narrow metal place, which I immediately recognized as an elevator when it went up a few flights.

After we left the elevator, I was taken into a room in which the senior intelligence officer who had arrested me was waiting. (In front of the house, he and the young intelligence officer had left before us in a civilian Volkswagen car.) He told me calmly and kindly that I would sleep there that night, and he took personal belongings from me, including my watch, pens, money and my identification card ... and he told me that we will meet after the end of the detention ... He asked if I needed anything and he wished me a good night. Immediately after the officer left, modern metal handcuffs were put on my

hands and the guard exchanged my own blindfold for a special blindfold of which they have a lot. Its color is black and it has more than one layer of cloth, wide in the middle, and it can be pulled from the ends to become relatively narrow.

Following this, he led me to some place on the same floor after we passed something like a lobby. He opened a door and took me in. My foot bumped part of a body on the floor; it seemed like a foot. The guard said calmly: Watch out. Then I found myself leaning against a wall ... He told me: Sleep and relax here until the morning. I asked him: Aren't you going to take off my handcuffs, since I am in a secure place? He said: No, they won't be removed until your departure and only when you go to the bathroom. I asked him about the blindfold and he said: Not until your departure from this floor. For your own good, he pleaded with me, please don't speak a lot. I asked him finally about a blanket since it was very cold. The guard was immediately sympathetic and said: You are a respectable person. Why are you here? I replied: Aren't others who come here also respectable? ... He then stopped talking entirely and told me not to speak at all, that speaking is absolutely forbidden ... I stretched out on the floor and noticed after a few minutes an injured person stretched out on the damp wooden floor, most likely the same one I had bumped into, and a very thick blanket which could cover my legs slightly below the knee.

*The guard said: You are a respectable person. Why are you here?
I replied: Aren't others who come here also respectable?*

Moments before I had spoken to him, the guard had said that the officer left the sandwiches for me that my mother had given to him ... I thanked the guard but said I had no appetite for food. After I stretched out on the floor, I tried to put my hands behind my head as a pillow but I was unsuccessful. In fact, this movement increased the pressure of the left metal handcuff ... I realized with the passage of time that this kind of handcuff has teeth and whenever you make a move the teeth become tighter and tighter ... As days went by, this caused pressure and affected the sensation in my left thumb, accompanied by pain in both hands. I didn't sleep much during the night because I kept thinking about the meaning of this. If the matter was merely detention for this night, then why the handcuffs and blindfold? At most I slept for an hour or so ... The next morning, Friday, February 8, 1991, the day began with distribution of breakfast, which was the same as every other meal every day ... a loaf of [Arabic] bread and two pieces of *ta'miyya* [fried ground fava beans]. During the ten days, this meal changed once, and that was *kushari* [rice and lentils] inside the bread instead of *ta'miyya* ... Twice, one tomato had been added to the *ta'miyya* ... Friday morning I also had no appetite to eat ... The guard came to take me ... I walked with him blindly and after a few steps he opened a door and I was told: Doctor ... sit.

A person with a loud voice with a severe tone, full of self confidence. The content of his long lecture focused on examples of the most difficult cases (the attempted assassination of Zaki Badr,¹ the assassination of Mahgoub²), and how in the same chair the suspects confessed in front of the minister in the first case and after two hours in the case of Mahgoub. Since the person under torture confessed in detail to a meeting the next day with his accomplices in the assassination, this enabled the police to arrest three and kill two. Although it was possible to arrest them, the apparatus already had decided that they were hopeless cases because they had already been accused several times but never gave up. He also emphasized in his speech that I am here under his complete control and there is no authority in Egypt that can interfere with what may happen to me, particularly since a notification had been sent out that I had escaped during my arrest and they had covered themselves with an arrest warrant notifying police stations, police lookouts, ports and airports ... Therefore if I became stubborn -- and I will not be able to -- it is possible that I will be killed here and my body taken away in a closed police car that no one will stop on the way. He told me that he took advantage of the existence of detention orders to include me ... in order to have me alone here and extract everything he wants.

He emphasized that I am here under his complete control and there is no authority in Egypt that can interfere with what may happen to me. If I became stubborn. I will be killed here and my body taken away in a closed police car ...

Following that, he went on to tell me that my detention order was not yet signed and I can go home this evening (Friday), or the next morning at most, if I speak frankly and voluntarily, and give them everything I know sincerely, and that I have nothing to fear regardless of the degree of my own involvement. In short, if I help him, he will help me ... and, if I wish, he will leave it up to me to choose if I want to collaborate with them permanently -- although they do not pay much, they are very discreet.

He started his questioning by saying: Who are you? I told him my name, my profession and the areas of my activities ... He mocked me and said: Who are you? I kept saying the same thing. Then he started to repeat his threats and began to explain to me the specialty of torture, which will make me say everything after being in a debilitated state, although it is more respectable to confess without torture. During this speech, while

¹The former Egyptian Minister of the Interior -- MEW.

²Dr. Rifat al-Mahgoub, speaker of the Egyptian People's Assembly and a close associate of President Mubarak from the ruling National Democratic Party, was assassinated in Cairo on October 12, 1990 -- MEW.

explaining, he started to put his hand on my leg and shoulders violently, accompanied by some vulgar words about my family ... An extremely calm, older voice interrupted (the first one told him "Hey, pasha") and advised me not to degrade myself and not to be clever. They would give me an opportunity to think. He also warned me against any lying and warned that if I stopped eating they would torture me ... because I have to eat in order to endure torture! The security man was called and the younger officer with the loud voice told him: Beat him so that his brain work`s good.

I started to grope. I was asked to lift my arms all the way up and they were tightened to a metal bar ... my feet barely touched the floor, but the weight of my body was still carried by my feet. I thought that the next day I would be lifted up ... but I realized that this was the preferred hanging in my case ... I thanked God for that ... although I discovered its cruelty by enduring it for long hours ... After several hours on Friday - after the calling for the fourth prayer -- the officer called for me another time and asked me if I wanted to speak voluntarily. I told him I will say what I know, and how nice it would be if he had specific questions so I could answer clearly and at length. Then he asked the guard to continue hanging me in front of an air current until the next day ... and they did this and I continued to hang, standing, the entire night until the second call for prayers on Saturday, February 9, 1991. During the "standing," the guard told me that my handcuffs would be taken off for a few minutes if I ate. I told him I hope you do that but I cannot eat because I almost want to vomit, and my desire to eat had disappeared.

The security man was called and the younger officer told him: Beat him so that his brain works good...

I was asked to lift mv arms all the way up and they were tightened to a metal bar. Mv feet barely touched the floor but the weight of mv body was still carried by mv feet. I continued to hang, standing, the entire night ...

Following the above-mentioned call for prayers on Saturday, my hands finally were brought down. Although I was fully clothed, my body was shivering from the cold for several hours at the end of the night and during the early hours of the morning. I had a profound desire merely to sit ...

I was taken to the always-threatening officer with the loud voice and he said: Hey, Mandour, has your brain softened? I asked him: Why? What's going on, sir? ... I was surprised by a series of successive violent slaps on the face and neck, which I could not count, some of which were accompanied by "lightning" in my left eye. The same voice told me only several words as it came closer: You are a physician and you know that we'll make you lose your sight.

"Hey, Mandour, has your brain softened?"

The beating stopped for a while and I was standing ... Then a series of vulgarities started, which I had rarely heard, despite my contact with different social classes. These vulgarities were not merely abominable but were meant to degrade the person to whom they were directed and to conquer him psychologically if he didn't reply. I instantly felt extremely insulted and did not know what to do in this situation. But he was faster than me with one phrase: Take off his clothes. The guard took me a few steps outside the room after a door was opened between us. They took off my suit, which I was wearing when I was arrested, my tie, my shirt, my pullover and my undershirts (and I had three of them because of the cold), my shoes, my socks. They left me only with my underpants and took me another time through the door to stand in front of the officer after they removed my metal handcuffs and exchanged them for a strong cloth used to tie my hands behind my back. I was surprised by the officer telling me that I am a lowly animal and that he will punish me with electricity, which I deserve ... and immediately I found myself jumping two steps back from merely being touched by an electrical tool on my shoulder. He repeated it several times. I jumped every time, and anger was rising inside me ... because I did not imagine, despite the slaps I had received, which were the first slaps in my life, that they would carry my physical mistreatment further, particularly given my professional scientific position, my clearly known public activities, and the fact that they did not specify an accusation against me

After several shocks ... the barbaric officer screamed and said: Bring him in. They accompanied me several steps through a door and I found myself in a place with a soft layer of thick foam on the floor ... They also tied the soles of my feet with strong fabric. Then one of them kicked me on the soles of my feet. I immediately found myself lying on my back and my hands behind me ... They put something metal that pried open my legs from the knees and fixed them in that position ... then I found metal bars being pushed in between my arms and my torso and I recognized that these were sophisticated bars very close to the area of my chest but without touching it ... Then I felt the very loud sound of the barbaric officer and the waves of his voice on my face when he turns to me and says: I will ride you, (you ***).³ He started to apply the electrical machine

He started to apply the electrical machine at continuous intervals to my shoulders in circles and in perpendicular lines ... He moved on to the nipples of my chest, then the abdomen, then the navel, then the inside of the thighs ... Then he started very precisely with this machine on the scrotum, then on the shaft of the penis and its head and its opening.

repeated it several times, I jumped every time, and anger was rising inside me ...

³This expression in Arabic also can be used in a vulgar manner to mean sexual intercourse – Translator.

at continuous intervals to my shoulders in circles and in perpendicular lines for a distance of centimeters -- and not just a touch. There was no chance of jumping. But my poor body was jerking and it almost wanted to break all the restraints but in vain ... He moved on to the nipples of my chest, then the abdomen, then the navel, then the inside of the thighs and sometimes he travels up and down. Then he yelled: Take off his cloth [underpants]!. Then he started very precisely with this machine on the scrotum, then on the shaft of the penis and its head and its opening ... At that moment I was jerking and my head moved up to its maximum position. When my head was going up, in front of my mouth was a metal bar -- I didn't know where it came from -- but I was biting it without feeling any pain from this biting except in the following days. And, sadly, I was convulsing like a slaughtered animal ... I said a few words, of which I recall: Are you treating a dog? And his answer was extremely degrading ...

And another: Isn't this enough?

The electricity stopped immediately, and he told me: Oh, you are rational ... Your status doesn't allow you to degrade yourself (as if I am the one who degraded it!). He said that he is sad and that he is obliged (!) to do what he did to me ... and he ordered the security to put on half of my clothes (pants, shirt, shoes) to start the investigation. (Throughout my 10 days, the policemen in this building, or at least on this floor, were called security because you do not hear the name of any officer or any policeman, although you can distinguish the kind of relations between the first and the second.)

Finally the investigation started ... I was asked to speak about my public activities, which means June 8, 1967, when police cars roamed the quarter where I was living, calling through loudspeakers to every capable youth to volunteer for the defense of the country and to gather at Nadi as-Shams in Heliopolis ...

Month after month, year after year, in a way which makes resentment dominate the individual and makes him wish to get rid of the deep degradation because of the personal surrender in narrating life stories while blindfolded and handcuffed, without being able to reply to accusations ... We finished at a late hour of the next morning, Sunday, February 10, on the condition that it would be continued the next day ... My psychological state was very bad and I felt profoundly degraded, to the point where for an hour I thought of suicide but I did not even find any implement in the bathrooms to help to do that, in addition to their continuous surveillance without my having the same advantage ... I slept because of exhaustion for very few hours, the officer awakening me to resume the investigation, which continued all of Sunday until the evening. By then I had completed narrating at length the events of many years, such as travel, which [the officer] emphasizes, and the beginning of my relationship with the Palestinian Red Crescent, the Palestinians outside the Crescent whom I met in

I was shocked by his screaming and beating me violently with double fists on both sides of my chest, which knocked me down on the floor more than once ... I begged him to shoot me with two bullets ... He commented that he doesn't kill but he squeezes the individual until he brings out what is inside him.

Lebanon in 1981, whom I saw after that, and the nature of my relationship with them. He further asked about illegitimate and antagonistic acts against the security of the country which [the Palestinians] asked of me. My answer was identical to the fact of the matter -- that all of them asked nothing of me, but that they find that what I do regarding medical support to be more than anyone else and they praised that a lot throughout the 12 years ... After saying "give him food and a cigarette," he left me at a late hour on Sunday. He resumed the investigation on Monday morning, February 11, 1991 ... until midday, at which point I covered up to 1989 ... I was shocked after midday by his screaming and beating me violently with double fists on both sides of my chest, which knocked me down on the floor more than once (the guard lifted me up), barraging me with the most abominable expressions, accusing me of wasting the time of the State Security apparatus and disregarding his valuable time, which the country paid for by sending him on missions abroad ... and in my capacity of being a son of a whore, as he says, he either will ruin my outside life completely by detention and summoning everyone I meet, to force me flee the country, or get rid of me completely in broad daylight, as he did recently with a physician of the religious tendencies.⁴

He screamed: Take off his clothes ... and the procedure repeats for a period of time in multiples of the first time. He threatens that he will ride me and perform a sexual act on me ... Then I was tied in the same way, the metal rod which separates my knees put in place, and what I considered a chair positioned over my chest. He went quickly over my body from the top (with electricity). Then they removed my underwear. His total concentration was on this sensitive area, emphasizing to me, before he knocked me down, that he will, as he says, make me impotent and that I will not leave him a man. I told him I do not need more and as long as I am not registered with you here and no one knows my whereabouts and, given the ease of getting rid of my body, I begged him to shoot me with two bullets and not to continue insulting me more than this ... and I am in my total mental capacity and I lived my life fully and I won't leave orphans or a widow behind me ... and the faith of my elderly mother will help her to endure the written fate and destiny ... He commented on this in a vulgar voice, emphasizing this time that he doesn't kill but he

squeezes the individual until he brings out what is inside him ... At that moment, I asked him to write down what he wants me to say and I will sign it, since I am incapable of inventing and charging unfounded allegations about the Palestinians I know or about myself ... The monster erupted and roared. He cursed me terribly and said: We are not like you

He cursed me terribly and said: We are not like you sons of whores, and we do not fabricate, but we are an apparatus which works through a scientific method ... He continued to torture me with electricity.

⁴The reference appears to be to an Islamic activist, possibly a member of the technically illegal Muslim Brotherhood party in Egypt or another Islamist political organization -- MEW.

sons of whores, and we do not fabricate, but we are an apparatus which works through a scientific method. ... My last words were that the scientific method is to gather enough information about me by surveillance, eavesdropping or sending informers who are close to me, in order to confront me with facts, not to ask me to create events by torture and beating ... Immediately after I finished my words, I found myself on my back so he could continue to torture me with electricity, which I have already described ... This time God helped me with continuous speech while I was under electricity, instead of biting the metal rod like the first time ... Strangely, my speech had a meaning, although I did not prepare it in advance ... I told him: You are wretched, you are suspicious and you have no way of verifying anything except by this heinous act ... your expressions do not shake me because you are cursing someone in your imagination, not the person who is in front of you. Our country will not progress as long as you treat people like me in this manner. I presented only one research about the children of the *intifada*, which did not cost more than five thousand dollars but will yield us about a half-million dollars from international organizations to build a psychiatric care center in Gaza ... And it is difficult for me to remember such words because I was jerking under severe pain while I was talking like this ... But I think that it made it easier for me and made me endure the long period, which I cannot specify exactly, but it was much longer than the first time, which seemed endless ... This session concluded with words from an older person (the one who was called pasha the first time) who was present without my knowing it, and who said only: Stop.

This painful, degrading session ended ... and he ordered that all of my clothes be put on me ... and he resumed interrogating me until the early hours of the morning of Tuesday, February 12, 1991. On the basis of his method, it seems that he realized after this session that I had nothing to say except what I really said ... and the procedure of the investigation reflects this.

He finally asked me about two or three points which were not incriminating but at least they were tangible points. I answered with complete clarity and elaboration, adding information that clearly they did not know ... I challenged him politely if he could find one word or one event I mentioned that was incorrect or evasive ... He told me that he will resume the interrogation early the next day. He ordered security to give me a cigarette and feed me because I had not eaten since the morning ...

They took me from his room another time through the door into the large room in which I was detained with others ... I continued to be blindfolded and handcuffed the rest of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, awaiting the resumption of the interrogation ... Suddenly I heard his voice another time ... I was concentrating on my surroundings with sharp attention ... Some of [the detainees] start to cry from the moment the security takes them from the large room in which we are held, and continue with audible crying after passing through the door of the officer's adjacent room. Then we hear relentless screaming until they return to us. Then they begin to calm down to the point of long sobbing, which exposes them to reproach and some degrading words from our

guards, who also tell them occasionally to save themselves so the torture will stop. Most of the time we were about 14 persons, which I realized when the security made computations about the food late at night, when they were calculating the sum of 28 plus 14 ...

The officer praised their good treatment of me because I was not exposed to torture. When I asked him if he was speaking seriously, he told me: Of course. Did anybody torture you? He pointed out that human rights in Egypt are better than elsewhere. I told him: Really, at least it's better than Syria and Iraq. He told me: It's even better than America and France. At any rate, be careful because the human rights movement is directed from outside.

Thursday, February 14 ... A number of detainees were transferred ... Then on Friday two others came ... On Saturday, February 16, I was called in the evening ... and they told me you will receive your belongings and I actually received them ... Then I went back to the large room handcuffed and blindfolded (the blindfold was partially removed, while the guard was behind me so I didn't see him, in order to see my belongings and sign for their receipt) ... Moments later, they told me that the orders are to handcuff me behind my back. After a while I was called to meet another officer. I did not know him from before, but his voice indicated he was in

his mid-50's. He told me that the result of my interrogation is positive and that a recommendation was submitted to the administration not to resume the period of detention, which has been decided, and that I am a person who exhibited readiness to cooperate with them. The officer praised their good treatment of me because I was not exposed to torture, according to him. He apologized for the blindfold and handcuffs which I wore as I stood in front of him, praising the scientific method they follow ... When I asked him if he was speaking seriously, he told me: Of course. Did anybody torture you? ... Avoiding any arguments, I told him to excuse me from answering this question now because, really, the prospect of going outside from this hell started to tempt me ... He pointed out, finally that human rights in Egypt are better than elsewhere ... I told him: Really, at least it's better than Syria and Iraq -- there's no comparison ... He then told me: It's even better than America and France. At any rate, be careful because the human rights movement is directed from outside. ... I left him while he was saying to the guards: Good treatment until his transfer.

I left this floor in the company of a guard. While we were going downstairs he lifted the blindfold and opened the handcuffs ... We went to the ground floor and he took me to the office of an intelligence officer in the Palestine Branch ... where I met Maj. Hassan Tantawi and Col. 'Az sitting in his office in the same room ... Maj. Hassan welcomed me, ordered me a cup of tea, then coffee, and offered to let me call my house in order to bring blankets or anything else I needed because, regrettably, there is a detention order. I actually called my family to reassure my elderly mother and to tell her the good

circumstances I am in, telling her not to worry at all and that I'm in need of nothing. I thanked Maj. Hassan Tantawi, who then sent me to the detention chamber in the basement. The time was eleven on Saturday evening, February 16. I was very happy that I could see. After my temporary happiness, I sat without any sleep until the morning among more than twenty people, stunned by everything that had happened.

At nine in the morning on Sunday, February 17, the transfer police came and took me, and before midday put me in Abu Za'bal Industrial Detention.

Dr. Mohamed Mandour