

Sweden: Expulsions carried out by US agents, men tortured in Egypt

Revelations by Swedish TV4 in a documentary, "The broken promise", on 17 May 2004 showed that the expulsion of two men - ordered by the Cabinet - to Egypt on 18 December 2001 was carried out by hooded US agents. The plane booked by the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO) was cancelled when another plane - N379P - a "Gulfstream" executive jet supplied by a firm on the east coast of the USA which works exclusively for the the US Defence Department (two months earlier the same plane removed a Jeminite student, Jamil Gasim, in chains from Karachi in Pakistan to Amman in Jordan).

The two men, Muhammed Al Zery and Ahmed Agiza, were alleged to have had connected to terrorist groups - both had been involved in islamic movements in Egypt. Ahmed Agiza fled from Egypt to Pakistan then Iran and finally Sweden in September 2000 with his wife and children (there are now five children). Muhammed Al Zery, an acquaintance of Agiza, fled from Egypt in 1991 and arrived in Sweden in August 1999.

The Swedish Migration Board decided that both needed protection and granted them asylum.

However, the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO), in the post 11 September 2001 climate, decided to respond to a US request for their removal to Egypt where they could be questioned at will and by agencies whose reputation for using ill-treatment and torture was well-established. At 11.45 am on 18 December 2001 the Swedish cabinet agreed - on the basis of SÄPO's recommendation and "information from Egypt" - that the men should be expelled.. At 16.48 Ahmed Agiza was apprehended in Karlstad, on the way home from a course in Swedish and a few minutes later Muhammed Al Zery in a shop in Stockholm.

They were driven to Bromma airport in Stockholm where the special jet, N379P, has landed. They are taken to a room where a group of men in plain clothes from the plane are waiting - "they have their faces hooded". Then:

"The two prisoners have their clothes cut from their bodies by scissors, without their hand- and footcuffs being loosened. The naked and chained prisoners have a suppository of unknown kind inserted into their anus, and diapers are put on them. They are forcibly dressed in dark overalls. Their hands and feet are chained to a specially designed harness. On the plane, both men are blindfolded and hooded.

... the plane takes off at 21.49 and sets course towards Egypt"

The men's lawyers are officially informed by letter which arrived two days later.

How did the Swedish government, which is signed up to all the European and international treaties concerning peoples' rights, agree to send the two men back to Egypt where according to the government there are: *"Reports of police brutality, maltreatment and torture in police jails and prisons are common, and seem to be well founded in many cases."* Gun-Britt Andersson, then state secretary at the Foreign office, says they obtained a unique guarantee from Egypt that the men would be treated humanely and according to international law. The Swedish government was also promised access to them.

All kinds of allegations were made by Swedish and Egyptian agencies against the men, most of which was completely untrue. Agiza has been convicted - he was convicted in his absence in 1999, together with 106 others, by a military court in Cairo for membership in Talal al-Fatah, an illegal organisation. The proceedings took 20 minutes. Neither the Egyptian security police nor Swedish Säpo have been able to produce any information pointing to Al Zery as a leading member of the same organisation.

What happened to the men in Egypt? The programme says that the first reports to the Swedish Foreign Office after visits told of the men being blindfolded, not being allowed to sleep, of beatings and maltreatment. Karl Soederberg, Amnesty International, said Sweden's government was wrong to send the men back to Egypt: "We know now that the foreign ministry knew about the cruel treatment shortly after the extradition."

Hamida Shalaby, Agiza's mother says:

"The mattress had electricity. The mattress. He would lay on it - like this - and his arms in chains on both sides and his legs in chains too. When they connected to the electricity, his body would rise up and then fall down and this up and down would go on until they unplugged electricity."

Kjell Jonsson, Zery's lawyer, says:

" that they have been tortured is now confirmed."

It is about very painful torture. They fasten electrodes to the most sensitive parts of the body. That is, genitals, breast nipples, tongue, ear lobes, underarms.

There are physicians present to judge how much torture, how much electricity, the prisoners can take. Afterwards the exposed parts are anointed, so that there won't be marks and scars, and cold water is poured to stop blood clots."

Muhammed Al Zery was released from detention in October 2003 but is not allowed to leave his home village without permission. At the beginning of May Agiza was sentenced again to 25 years in prison by a military tribunal (Swedish embassy officials were denied access to the proceedings on two of the three days).

Hans Dahlgren, Swedish Vice Foreign Minister, responded by putting the blame on Egypt saying that Agiza's trial was not a "fair" one and that they would be calling for a new one.

Kjell Jonsson, Zery's lawyer, says:

"it is absolutely forbidden according to international law to repatriate a person who risks being subjected to torture, and naturally, the Swedish government has a full responsibility for this."

Documentation

1. Full-transcript of "The broken promise", TV4, Monday 17 May 2004: [Transcript](#) (pdf)
2. Ambassador's report: [Report](#) (in Swedish, 1.32 MB) which includes the following:

TV4:s translation of Embassy report 1, classified part on Page 2: dated 23 January 2002:

"between the arrest in Sweden and the transfer to Tora: excessive brutality from the Swedish police when they were apprehended; enforced uncomfortable position in the aircraft during the transport to Egypt; forced blindfolding during the interrogation period, too cramped cells, ten days wait for Agizas ulcer medication after being examined by a doctor; beatings by guards during transport to and from interrogation; threats from interrogator of repression against his family in case he didn't tell everything about his time in Iran etc."

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