

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. How far is Kana from Cairo?**
- 2. Is there any information on the work of the police in Kana?**
- 3. Do members of the police force stamp passports in Cairo?**
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- 5. Is it possible to find out how many police stations there are in Domiat?**
- 6. The address of the police station in Domiat?**
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RESPONSE

1. How far is Kana from Cairo?

Little information was found on a town in Egypt named Kana. Sources indicate that the town is probably the one usually spelt as Qina, Qena or Qana.

The 2004 *Europa* entry on Egypt states that Qena or Qina is the name of one of the 27 governorates of Egypt, and is also the name of the provincial capital (Europa 2003, *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*, Europa Publications, London, p.326 – Attachment 1).

The *Encarta* map of Egypt indicates that Qina is about 400km south of Cairo ('Egypt' 1999, *Microsoft Encarta* – Attachment 2).

The Lonely Planet map of Egypt is also attached, which uses the alternate spelling of Qena (Humphreys, A. et al, 2004, *Lonely Planet: Egypt*, frontpiece – Attachment 3).

2. Is there any information on the work of the police in Kana?

The sources consulted indicate that there were special security forces, referred to in some reports as security police, operating in Qena during the 1990s. Their work involved combating Islamic militant groups such as the Islamic Group, which had been responsible for several violent attacks during that period. Reports also indicate that there was some kind of prison camp in Qena governorate at that time and that it was used to incarcerate and interrogate suspected militants and family members.

A Human Rights Watch report dating from 1995 examines hostage-taking and intimidation by security forces such as State Security Investigation (SSI) in their pursuit of Islamic militants. It contains several references to Qena:

“It is now policy to take family members hostage,” one Cairo defense lawyer told Human Rights Watch. According to the lawyer, many family members, including women, were detained in Upper Egypt beginning in April 1992: “In two months, we submitted seventy letters of complaint about detentions, from Qena governorate alone, to the Prosecutor General” (p.8)...

... The lawyer said that the leader of the Islamic Group in nearby Qena intervened with local police officials and the women were released. “When senior police heard about this, they were furious,” he said, “and they started collecting the children.” About twenty boys, aged fifteen and sixteen, were detained and held at Isna police station for six weeks as the search for suspects continued (p.9)...

... At the time of the hostage-taking, the village was filled with troops and officers from the **paramilitary Central Security Forces and SSI**. “They were headquartered in Luxor or **Qena**, and they stayed for two months. Officers occupied the houses and demanded food. The women started preparing group meals,” the lawyer from the area told Human Rights Watch. “They prevented people from working the fields because they were afraid they would bring food to those in hiding. Many people left the village. There was total fear” (p.9)...

... Also beginning in June 1992 there was a **large security forces presence in Qena city** and its village of Homeidat, in an apparent all-out effort to apprehend eight Islamic Group leaders and other members of the organization. “They entered Homeidat houses late at night, even though they knew that the wanted people were not there. This is a family village, and they deliberately created tension and nervousness among the people,” a local lawyer told Human Rights Watch. He continued:

For each wanted person, they took ten or more family members, including women and old men. **They were brought to the Qena police station, the [paramilitary] Central Security Forces camp near Qena, and to secret places.** Most were released after two days, but some were held for as long as a week. They were threatened, and told that they would be left alone if they surrendered their relatives. Not less than 250 hostages were taken in June (p.10)...

... A lawyer from Upper Egypt told Human Rights Watch that he was one of the hostages taken by SSI during a mass arrest in his town in 1992. He said that security forces arrived at his house at two or three in the morning. He was brought to a **paramilitary camp in Qena**, and held there for seven days. “There were about fifty other people with me. About ten or fifteen of us were hostages,” he said (p.10)... (Human Rights Watch 1995, *Egypt: Hostage-Taking And Intimidation By Security Forces*, January, Vol. 7. No. 1 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Egypt.htm> – Accessed 9 March 2007 – Attachment 4).

A 1994 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture contains references to the security police and to the camp at Qena:

209. By letter dated 26 August 1993 the Special Rapporteur informed the Government that he had received reports according to which torture was commonly practised in police stations, the headquarters of the State Security Intelligence at Lazoghly Square and on the premises of the Firag al-Amn (security brigades) and the **State Security Investigations (SSI) police throughout the country**. Official complaints lodged by lawyers with the Procurator General's Office regarding torture reportedly remain without response or apparent investigation.

210. The Special Rapporteur was also informed that **for the last three years the SSI has illegally used camps of the Central Security Forces (CSF) in the south of the country as centres for the detention and torture of detainees suspected of belonging to Islamist groups**, with the aim of forcing them to give information or confess to charges against them, or as a form of punishment. The following camps were mentioned in particular: the Abnoub camp, on the eastern bank of the Nile, opposite the village of Assara, near Assiut city; **the Qena camp, located in the vicinity of the Sawam'a area, 6 km from Qena city**; the Fayyoub camp, in the Kahafah region, 15 km from Fayyoub city; and the Red Sea camp in Hurghada city, close to the Dahar police station. According to the reports no presidential decree has been issued setting up these camps (which are considered military zones) as special prisons, neither do they belong to the other categories of prisons established by Law 396 of 1956 on the organization of prisons, and as such they do not fall under the competence of the Prisons Authority responsible for the implementation of the statutes and decisions on the organization of prisons. Moreover, the camps are reportedly not subject to judicial supervision, lack official records in which the detention orders are registered, and detainees held in them are denied any contact with lawyers or family. (UN Commission on Human Rights 1994, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, E/CN.4/1994/31 (1994)* (Nigel Rodley, *Special Rapporteur*), University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/commission/torture94/cat-egypt.htm> – Accessed 9 March 2007 – Attachment 5).

Other reports contain references to activities of the police and security forces in Qena.

The US Department of State report on Egypt for 1999 mentions that “during the year, security forces and police arrested at least 249 persons allegedly associated with the Muslim Brotherhood” including four in Qena (US Department of State 2000, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1999: Egypt*, 25 February – Attachment 6).

A 1994 report from *BBC Monitoring* discusses activities by State Security Intelligence (SSI) after the death of a militant leader. One of these was the arrest of “lawyer Abd al-Harith Muhammad Ibrahim Madani” who was “accused in connection with several extremist cases in Isna in Qina governorate”. Investigators seized documents and records which showed he had been involved in financing militant groups (“Terrorist” suspects arrested in raids in various areas’ 1994, *BBC Monitoring Service: Middle East*, 16 May – Attachment 7).

A 1995 report by *Jane's Intelligence Review* does not mention Qena specifically, but does examine the anti-Islamist operations that were going on around Egypt at that time. It states:

Over the past two years, hundreds of members or suspected members, as well as some leaders of Al ‘Gama’a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group) and the smaller Jihad (Holy War) and Vanguard of Conquest militant factions, have been imprisoned, killed or executed in Egypt. Nonetheless, core activists remain at large and the threat from militant Islam to one of the West’s most important strategic partners in the Arab Middle East continues... (Wyllie, James 1995, ‘Egypt – Staying the course?’, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 November – Attachment 8).

The same report continues:

The fact that there is no slackening of the government's strategy of harsh repression against proven and suspected militants is evidence of a real sense of threat still pervading the authorities. Illustrative of this policy was the sentencing earlier this year of two men to death and 12 others to prison terms from three to 25 years for their involvement in the near-fatal stabbing of Naguib Nahfouz, Egypt's Nobel-prize winning novelist...

...**Another illustration of this sense of crisis is the daily arrest of hundreds of suspects. The Egyptian Organization of Human rights reckons that detentions number between 100 and 150 a day.** Many are released after interrogation but many are detained for long periods and some serve as hostages for the arrest of suspected relations. This policy may reflect a deep feeling of insecurity but it also seems to have had some success in reducing militant activities, not least in the Cairo area where the drop in attacks has been greatest of all. Interior Minister Hassan al-Alfi, a career policeman trained at the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, is credited with this success ... (Wyllie, James 1995, 'Egypt – Staying the course?', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 November – Attachment 8).

A report by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights on the 2005 parliamentary elections indicates that security forces are sometimes used by the government to arrest representatives of opposition candidates, including in Qena governorate:

The violations carried out in most poll stations:

1) Arrests

In four Governorates (Port Said, Al-Gharbia, Qena and Fayoum), some poll stations witnessed random arrests to 76 representatives of the (NDP, Independents, and Muslim Brothers). Respectively, six NDP- four Independents – and sixty-six Muslim Brother, the majority of the arrested were in Port Said (forty-eight) from different belongings...

... **Qena Governorate:**

Security forces arrested four representatives of an Independent candidate.

... In Qena, Qos Constituency, security forces arrested four representatives of the independent candidate (Mohamed Fahmy Khabeer) in front of poll station (Al-Mafargia). Respectively, (Ahmed Hassan Nour, Fathy Mahmoud Ibrahim, Ghareeb Ahmed Soliman and Ahmed Shaaban Abd Allah) (The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights 2005, *2005 Parliamentary Elections Run-Offs Initial Report*, 27 November <http://www.eohr.org/report/2005/re1127.shtml> – Accessed 13 March 2007 – Attachment 9).

Please see Questions 5-7 for general information on the police and security forces in Egypt.

3. Do members of the police force stamp passports in Cairo?

Among the sources consulted, information was not found on whether security personnel or police stamp passports at Cairo airport. Reports do indicate that Cairo International Airport has the usual customs and immigration officials, but that there is also a strong presence of security personnel at the airport, and that the SSI has interrogation rooms there.

A 2006 article from the travel website Skytrax quotes anecdotes by various travellers to Cairo International Airport. One of these indicates that when leaving Cairo there are security desks which clear people before they check in, as well as immigration and customs desks. Another

mentions policemen performing a security function at airport entrances ('CAI – Cairo Airport' 2006, Skytrax website, http://www.airlinequality.com/Airports/Airport_forum/cai.htm – Accessed 13 March 2007 – Attachment 10).

A 2005 article from *Al-Ahram Weekly* describes measures taken during a state of emergency in 2005 after a bomb blast in Sharm El-Sheikh, involving large numbers of security personnel at airports:

Early last Saturday, a state of emergency was declared at the nation's 22 airports -- one of the first official reactions to the devastating events that had just taken place in Sharm El-Sheikh. Security was tightened everywhere, but especially at Cairo International Airport, where a battalion of armed vehicles were quickly dispatched. Extra procedures were put into place at the airport itself: a trained snifferdog unit arrived to inspect luggage for explosives; tourists' bags were thoroughly scanned; and their travel documents double-checked before they were allowed through passport control. In nearby Heliopolis, dozens of security agents checked the roads leading to the airport for suspicious-looking parked cars (Nafie, Reem & El-Menshaw, Mustafa 2005, 'Transparency at last?' 2005, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue No.753, 28 July-3 August <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/753/fo8.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2007 – Attachment 11).

A 2004 report by the Committee to Protect Journalists discusses the expulsion from Egypt of a US journalist, which involved SSI personnel at the airport:

According to Levinson, Egyptian officials detained him on January 28 at airport passport control and transferred him to an interrogation room belonging to State Security Investigation (SSI), the security service's investigative arm. He said he was briefly questioned about where he worked and what he was doing in Egypt and forced to remain in the room for several hours. After midnight, a police or military officer in uniform informed him he was being expelled from the country without explanation. Levinson said the officer was holding what looked like an official report, which the journalist asked to see, but was refused. Throughout his detention, Levinson was not allowed to make any phone calls.

Levinson, who was told he could purchase a plane ticket to leave the country immediately or wait in the SSI office until the plane on which he had arrived departed in a few days for the United States, left on a flight a few hours later.

Levinson believes that two articles may have triggered his expulsion. On November 20 and 21, 2003, *The Boston Globe* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, respectively, published similar articles written by Levinson describing the security services' alleged torture of political detainees in Egypt. The day the *Globe* article ran, Levinson left the country to go on assignment to Turkey. Upon his return to Egypt on November 27, 2003, the SSI at the Cairo International Airport detained and questioned him about where he lived and what he did in Egypt for nearly four hours before releasing him. Following that incident, he continued to work in Egypt unfettered until his January expulsion (Committee to Protect Journalists 2004, 'Egypt: Ambassador says expelled journalist can resume work', *2004 News Alert*, 20 February <http://www.cpj.org/news/2004/Egypt20feb04na.html> – Accessed 13 March 2007 – Attachment 12).

A 2004 article from an Arabic online information service describes the experiences of a person who was mistakenly detained by security personnel at Cairo International Airport, and put in detention rooms with "over forty other prisoners from all over the world" (Aziz, Salah Abdel 2004, 'Frightening passengers at the Cairo International Airport', Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, <http://www.hrinfo.net/> – Attachment 13).

Please see Questions 5-7 for general information on the police and security forces in Egypt.

4. How far is Domiat from Cairo?

Sources indicate that there are several other common spellings of Dormiat, including Damietta, Dormyat and Dumyat.

The 2004 *Europa* entry on Egypt states that Damietta is the name of one of the 27 governorates of Egypt, and is also the name of the provincial capital (Europa 2003, *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*, Europa Publications, London, p.326 – Attachment 1).

The *Encarta* map of Egypt indicates that Damietta is about 150km north of Cairo, on the Mediterranean coast ('Egypt' 1999, *Microsoft Encarta* – Attachment 2).

The Lonely Planet map of Egypt is also attached, which uses the alternate spelling of Dumyat (Humphreys, A. et al, 2004, *Lonely Planet: Egypt*, frontpiece – Attachment 3).

5. Is it possible to find out how many police stations there are in Domiat?

6. The address of the police station in Domiat?

7. The number of police officers in Domiat?

No detailed information was found on the police force in Damietta. The following sections provide some background information on Damietta which may be of use, including a few references to the police force and police stations; and on the function of the police in Egypt as a whole.

Damietta / Dormiat / Dormyat / Dumyat

The material below indicates that there are probably several police stations in Damietta, but details were not found of all their locations or of numbers of police officers.

As indicated above, the name Damietta (and its other spellings) refers both to a governorate and to a town which is the provincial capital. According to the 2001 census, there are 995,000 people in the governorate as a whole, which covers an area of 589.17 square km (Europa 2003, *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*, Europa Publications, London, p.326 – Attachment 1).

The English version of the website of the Egyptian government at <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/> was searched, but it contained no information about the police force in Damietta or elsewhere in Egypt.

The English version of the website of Damietta Governorate at <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/index.htm> was also searched. It provides information and statistics on a number of areas such as medical services and schools, but does not mention police stations.

The following information from the Damietta website may be useful in establishing where the major centres are in the governorate. The website contains five separate sections, representing different administrative divisions of Damietta governorate.

The division for Damietta City at <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/domiat/index.htm> provides a map of the administrative divisions of the governorate. It lists nine subdivisions for Damietta City, the links to which give details of local schools, mosques, hospitals and post offices. It does not list police stations, but it seems likely that at least some of these areas would have their own police stations. The telephone number for the Damietta Police Department is provided in the “Emergency” section (Information extracts on Damietta 2001, Damietta City website, <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/domiat/index.htm> – Accessed 15 March 2007 – Attachment 14).

The four other divisions of Damietta governorate also have their own websites. They also list telephone numbers under “Emergency” for the police department. The numbers provided for Ezbet Elborg <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/enezba/index.htm> and Kafr Elbatikh <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/Batikh/index.htm> are the same as for Damietta City, but the numbers for Ras Elbar <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/rasebar/index.htm> and Kafr Saad <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/kafr/index.htm> are different, which seems to imply that they have their own local police stations.

The following two reports contain some brief references to different police stations in Damietta.

A recent report from the Muslim Brotherhood website mentions a police stations in “the village of Saro, Az Zarqa, Damietta” (‘Damietta policemen adopt torturing policy, assume absolute power’ 2007, The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English website, 7 March <http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=SHow&Lang=E&ID=6546> – Accessed 15 March 2007 – Attachment 15).

A 2004 report on human rights in Egypt contains a table of police stations where torture is thought to have been practiced. It mentions a Farascoor Police station in Damietta (Saber, Karam et al 2004, *The Conditions of Human Rights in Egypt During the last Ten Years*, The Land Center for Human Rights Economic and Social Rights Series, Issue No.33, June http://www.omct.org/pdf/ESCR/2006/intl_conference2005/II_B_2_Egypt_general_evaluation.pdf – Accessed 15 March 2007 – Attachment 16).

The police in Egypt

The 2006 US Department of State report on Egypt contains a section describing the structure of the police and other security forces in the country. They have wide ranging powers of arrest detention under emergency legislation, and have been accused of numerous human rights abuses:

Role of Police and Security Apparatus

The country has both local and national law enforcement agencies, all of which fall under the Ministry of Interior. Local police operate in large cities and governorates. The ministry controls the State Security Investigations Service (SSIS), which conducts investigations, and the Central Security Force (CSF), which maintains public order. SSIS and CSF officers are responsible for law enforcement at the national level and for providing security for infrastructure and key officials, both domestic and foreign. Single-mission law enforcement agencies, such as the Tourist and Antiquities Police and the Anti-Narcotics General Administration, also work at the national level. The security forces operated under a central chain of command and were considered generally effective in their efforts to combat crime and terrorism

and preserve and maintain public order. However, a culture of impunity militated against systematic prosecution of security personnel who committed human rights abuses...

...Arrest and Detention

The Emergency Law allows detention of an individual without charge for up to 30 days, only after which a detainee may demand a court hearing to challenge the legality of the detention order, and may resubmit a motion for a hearing at one-month intervals thereafter. There is no limit to the detention period if a judge continues to uphold the detention order or if the detainee fails to exercise his right to a hearing. Incommunicado detention is authorized for prolonged periods by internal prison regulations. Human rights groups and the UN Committee Against Torture both expressed concern over the application of measures of solitary confinement.

In cases tried under the Emergency Law, access to counsel was often restricted or denied prior to the transfer of the accused to a courtroom to begin legal proceedings. Many detainees under the Emergency Law remained incommunicado in State Security detention facilities without access to lawyers. After these cases are transferred to trial, the court appoints a lawyer.

The Penal Code also gives the government broad detention powers. Prosecutors must bring charges within 48 hours following detention, or release the suspect. However, they may hold a suspect for a maximum of six months while they investigate. Arrests under the Penal Code occurred openly and with warrants issued by a district prosecutor or judge. There was a functioning system of bail for persons detained under the Penal Code but none for persons detained under the Emergency Law. The Penal Code contains several provisions to combat extremist violence, which broadly define terrorism to include the acts of "spreading panic" and "obstructing the work of authorities." ...

...There were also numerous arrests and detentions of non-MB opposition figures and demonstrators, particularly in connection with demonstrations in Cairo in May in support of judicial independence (see sections 2.b. and 3).

On April 28, state security briefly detained and interrogated Amir Salem and Ehab al-Kholy, lawyers for imprisoned opposition figure Ayman Nour. The investigation of Salem and El-Kholy, on charges of inciting the masses and insulting the president, came three weeks before Nour's scheduled appeal. Salem was the head of Nour's defense team.

Notwithstanding the prevailing State of Emergency, and the government's use of the emergency law provisions (e.g., to prohibit unauthorized gatherings of more than five people, or to arbitrarily detain citizens who aroused police suspicion), the government continued to rely on the regular penal code for the vast majority of criminal investigations and prosecutions. In those criminal cases investigated and prosecuted under the Penal Code, defendants generally had access to counsel. In cases tried under the extraordinary State Security courts authorized by the emergency law, defendants complained of inadequate access to counsel. In recent years, thousands of persons have been detained administratively under the Emergency Law on suspicion of terrorist or political activity. Several thousand others have been convicted and were serving sentences on similar charges (see section 1.e.). During the year HRAAP estimated that the total number of persons in administrative detention was approximately 10,000. HRAAP estimated that an additional 10,000 persons have been released over the past three years. Government officials disputed this figure, but did not provide authoritative data on detainees.

The security forces detained dozens of individuals in Sinai, in connection with ongoing investigations into the terror attacks there in October 2004, July 2005, and April 2006. At year's end there were no reliable estimates of the total number of suspects detained in the Sinai.

There were numerous examples of arrest and detention of peaceful demonstrators. During April and May, authorities arrested over 500 activists for participating in demonstrations in support of the independence of the judiciary (see section 2.b.). Also during the year, the government arrested and detained hundreds of persons associated with the MB, which has been an illegal organization since 1954.

Continuing a trend begun in 2005, the government periodically detained dozens of MB members and supporters. Over the course of the year, the government detained hundreds of opposition activists associated with the banned MB without charge or trial, including senior MB leaders Essam El-Erian and Mohamed Morsi, who remained in detention from May until early December as a result of their involvement in demonstrations in support of judicial independence. The precise number of MB activists in detention at year's end was unknown. Detention periods for MB members ranged from several weeks to several months, pending investigative outcomes. On October 26, HRW reported that it had collected the names of 792 MB members who had been detained between March and mid-October and that 62 of the 792 remained in custody: 33 of them without charge under provisions of the Emergency Law, and 29 of them on charges of "belonging to an illegal organization"... (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, 6 March – Attachment 17).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights website – www.eohr.org

Human Rights Watch website – www.hrw.org

Amnesty International website – www.amnesty.org

Aviation Security News website – www.airlinequality.com

Egyptian Government website - <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/>

Damietta Cities website - <http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/domiat/index.htm>

Google search engine – www.google.com

Factiva

Jane's Intelligence Review online database

Databases:

CISNET

ISYS

Microsoft Encarta

MRT-RRT Library

Lonely Planet: Egypt

The Middle East and North Africa Europa

List of Attachments

1. Europa 2003, *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*, Europa Publications, London. (RRT Library)
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8. Wyllie, James 1995, ‘Egypt – Staying the course?’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 1 November. (RRT General Papers)
9. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights 2005, *2005 Parliamentary Elections Run-Offs Initial Report*, 27 November <http://www.eohr.org/report/2005/re1127.shtml> – Accessed 13 March 2007.
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14. Information extracts on Damietta 2001, Damietta City website,
<http://www.domyat.gov.eg/English/domiat/index.htm> – Accessed 15 March 2007.
15. ‘Damietta policemen adopt torturing policy, assume absolute power’ 2007, The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English website, 7 March
<http://www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=6546> – Accessed 15 March 2007.
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http://www.omct.org/pdf/ESCR/2006/intl_conference2005/II_B_2_Egypt_general_evaluation.pdf – Accessed 15 March 2007.
17. US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, 6 March.