

RESOLUTION ON EGYPTIAN CENSORSHIP

WHEREAS, ALA in its Policy of #57.3 states that "Threats to the freedom of expression of any person become threats to the freedom of all; therefore ALA adopts as policy the principles of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations' General Assembly. The association will address the grievances of foreign nationals where the infringement of their rights of free expression is clearly a matter in which all free people should show concern," and;

WHEREAS, Middle East Watch has documented instances of episodic censorship in Egypt, including the removal from circulation of books considered offensive by scholars at al-Azhar, an ancient Islamic religious research and educational institution;

WHEREAS, Alaa Hamed has been sentenced by the Egyptians courts to prison for writing a novel said to promote heresy and contempt for religion;

WHEREAS, Amnesty International has recently issued the report, *Egypt: Grave Human Rights Abuses Amid Political Violence* (May 1993);

WHEREAS, The American Library Association has found it appropriate to act on Policy 57.3 in the past by condemning censorship and the interference with library and archival operations in Grenada (CD 28, Midwinter 84; CD 75, Annual 89), South Africa (CD 21, Midwinter 85; CD 58, Annual 86; CD 97, Annual 90; CD 24, Midwinter 91), the United Kingdom (CD 49, Annual 85), Iraq and Kuwait (CD18.4, Midwinter 91), Afghanistan (MD1, Annual 91), and Israel (CD 60, Annual 92);

WHEREAS, The American Library Association has found it appropriate to act on Policy 57.3 in the past by championing the cases of A.B. Roginsky (CD 86, Annual 82), H. Mykhaylenko (CD 57, Annual 87), T.R. Mubudafhasi (CD 28, Midwinter 89; CD 42, Midwinter 90), S. Rushdie (CD 76, Annual 89), and O. al-Safi (CD 59, Annual 92);

WHEREAS, Egypt considers itself to be a democracy.

WHEREAS, Egypt is the recipient of the second largest amount of United States foreign aid (*Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992, Table 1326, p. 792*);

RESOLVED, That the Social Responsibilities Round Table make known to all that it condemns these acts of restriction of freedom of individual expression and the right of the free dissemination of knowledge;

RESOLVED, That SRRT urges the ALA Council endorse this resolution;

RESOLVED, That ALA encourages its members to develop ways to support human rights and freedom of information and expression in Egypt, and that the International Relations Committee (IRC) be asked to develop strategies towards these ends; and be it further

RESOLVED That copies of this Resolution be sent to the appropriate persons, including but not limited to the U.S. Secretary of State, the Egyptian Ambassador to the United States, and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

COUNCIL MINUTES
Annual Conference
June 1993

Resolution on Egyptian Censorship, MD#6, Exhibit 30. Ms. Farley reported that Membership had voted to substitute the resolved clauses in the resolution with the resolved clauses from the 1990-91 CD#43.3, Resolution on Censorship in the Middle East, which read: "That the ALA objects to the censorship of books and informational materials throughout the Middle East including the closure of libraries; and that the ALA encourages all parties with interests in the Middle East to seek and find a proper balance between the protection of human rights and the need to ensure security for all inhabitants." Membership also added an additional resolved clause, which read: *"That copies of this resolution should be sent to the appropriate persons including, but not limited, to the U.S. Secretary of State, the Egyptian Ambassador, and the Secretary General of the UN."* Councilor Herbert Biblo and seconder moved the adoption of MD#6 as amended.

Councilors Larry Romans and Charles E. Beard then moved to amend the resolution by deleting the words *"Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S."* from the final resolved clause. Council

VOTED, To delete *"Egyptian Ambassador"* from the final resolved clause in MD#6.

In speaking to the deletion, Councilor Romans said that the point of the substitute motion was to make sure it dealt with the general issue of censorship and did not specifically name any country.

Councilor Bernard Margolis and several seconders moved and it was

VOTED, That the final resolved clause, which reads: *"That copies of this resolution should be sent to the appropriate persons including, but not limited to, the U.S. Secretary of State and the Secretary General of the UN"* be referred to the International Relations Committee.

Ms. Farley told Council that Membership took no action on the Treasurer's Report, MD#4; ALA Self-Study Committee Report, MD#5, and the Resolution on ALA Library School Support, MD#17, due to the lack of a quorum. Therefore, these items will be placed on the agenda for Membership I at the 1994 Annual Conference.

ALA MEMBERSHIP MEETING II
Wednesday, June 30, 1993, 9 a.m.-12 Noon
New Orleans Convention Center, Ballroom I

INTRODUCTIONS. President-Elect Hardy R. Franklin reintroduced President Marilyn L. Miller, Parliamentarian Edwin C. Bliss, Executive Director Peggy Sullivan, and ALA staff members assisting with these meetings.

AGENDA, MD#2, Exhibit 44. ALA members Beverly Lynch and Beverly Papai moved that the agenda be reordered in the following manner: (1) Memorials and Tributes; (2) Reports: President, Treasurer and Self-Study; and (3) Unfinished Business. The motion was **DEFEATED**.

By **CONSENT**, the original agenda was adopted.

MEMORIALS AND TRIBUTE RESOLUTIONS, Exhibit 27. The following Memorials were adopted:

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|--------|----------------------------|
| (M-11) | William Pène duBois |
| (M-12) | Claire Huchet Bishop |
| (M-13) | Sandra Pelos & Tom Ballard |
| (M-14) | Bruni Vergés |
| (M-15) | Charles Mikolaycak |
| (M-16) | Maureen Hayes |
| (M-17) | Frances Anna Sullivan |
| (M-18) | Elizabeth A. Widenmann |

Also noted was the recent death of Kenneth E. Vance, Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan School of Information and Library Studies, Ann Arbor.

The following tributes were adopted:

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| (T-3) | Warren Tsuneishi |
| (T-4) | Hannah V. McCauley |
| (T-5) | 100th Year Anniversary of the Drexel University
College of Information Studies |
| (T-6) | Dorothy L. Glasby |

COUNCIL MINUTES
Annual Conference
June 1993

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION ON EGYPTIAN CENSORSHIP, MD#6, Exhibit 30. ALA Member Alfred Kagan moved that ALA encourage its members to develop ways to support human rights and freedom of information and expression in Egypt, and that the International Relations Committee (IRC) be asked to develop strategies towards these ends; and, that copies of this resolution be sent to the appropriate persons, including but not limited to the U.S. Secretary of State, the Egyptian Ambassador to the United States, and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

ALA Members Nancy John and Bernard Margolis moved that Membership recommend that Council refer MD#6 to the International Relations Committee. The motion was **DEFEATED.**

ALA members J. Dennis Day and Carol French Johnson moved the following substitute: "That Membership reaffirm the policy of the American Library Association as expressed in CD#43.3, Censorship in the Middle East, passed July 1991 by the Council of the American Library Association."

ALA Member Mark Rosenzweig and seconder moved to amend and Membership

VOTED, That a final resolved clause be added to read:

"That copies of this resolution should be sent to the appropriate persons including, but not limited, to the U.S. Secretary of State, the Egyptian Ambassador, and the Secretary General of the UN."

The Membership then

VOTED, To approve the substitute motion as amended.

[EMBARGOED FOR 26 MAY 1993]

amnesty international

EGYPT

Grave human rights abuses amid political violence

MAY 1993

SUMMARY

AI INDEX: MDE 12/03/93

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Against a backdrop of escalating political and sectarian violence, the human rights situation in Egypt has suffered a serious deterioration in the last 12 months, characterized by mass arbitrary arrests, torture, long-term administrative detention, unfair political trials before military courts resulting in death sentences and possible extrajudicial executions. The government has adopted sweeping measures - often inconsistent with international human rights standards - in both law and practice to confront Islamic militant groups, some of whom have committed deliberate and arbitrary killings.

While the Egyptian Government responds to many of Amnesty International's inquiries, the responses have failed to allay the organization's concern regarding the continuing large scale abuse of human rights in the country. No substantive steps have been taken to protect the basic rights of detainees, and there are fears that the situation could get worse in the light of new laws extending police powers of arrest and detention in the absence of adequate safeguards.

May 24, 1993

The Nation.

WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYFH NEIER

A terrorist bomb is set to explode in twenty-four hours. The police do not know its location, but they have reason to believe it is intended to kill many. They have captured a suspect, but he won't talk. What do they do?

This imagined scenario is familiar to anyone who has taken part in debates over whether torture is ever justifiable. Advocates for human rights, of course, say no. Torture is always wrong. Moreover, they worry about the slippery slope. Although the circumstances in which torture might take place are usually not so dramatic—indeed, there is no known case that matches this hypothetical—it is easy for practitioners of torture to claim that they are averting a greater evil. Once the absolute prohibition is gone, the question of when to torture is a matter of discretion.

One country in whose case the world seems to be accepting the argument that torture is needed to prevent greater crimes is Egypt. Indeed, the country faces a severe threat from violent Islamist groups. They have attacked tourists, killed police, assassinated a leading advocate of religious tolerance, burned churches and, in an especially horrifying episode last year, murdered a dozen Coptic Christians in a southern village. Most recently, on April 20, the country's Information Minister and two aides were wounded in an assassination attempt. Although it is difficult to tell whether their popular support is growing, militant Islamists have achieved an increasingly prominent public presence. Also, the World Trade Center bombing has suggested their capacity to cause havoc internationally.

Although Islam is the official religion of Egypt, and Shariah is proclaimed to be the main source of legislation, in practice its government has been predominantly secular. And, since entering the peace agreement with Israel at Camp David a decade and a half ago, it has acquired a reputation for moderation in international affairs. Might it be possible for Islamic Jihad and similar groups to overthrow the government of President Hosni Mubarak?

The Mubarak government's response to extremist violence has been a blend of repression (e.g., torture) and accommodation, displaying its own brand of intolerance against those who are the targets of militant Islamists. Christians in Egypt—most of them Copts—who constitute about 6 percent of the population, suffer discrimination. Earlier this year one Egyptian Copt complained to my colleague Virginia Sherry of Middle East Watch, "The extremists firebomb our churches, and then the authorities do not allow us to rebuild." Then there is the episodic censorship—removing from circulation books considered offensive by scholars from Al-Azhar, an ancient Islamic religious research and educational institution partially financed by the government—and the eight-year prison sentence imposed on author Alaa

Hamed because his novel, *A Distance in a Man's Mind*, is said to promote heresy and contempt for religion. (Pending the Prime Minister's ratification of his sentence, which was handed down more than a year ago, Hamed remains at liberty but under guard because of the threat of assassination by Islamists.) Limitations on what may be published in Egypt also include an unwritten prohibition against direct criticism or caricature of Mubarak.

As for torture, it has long been practiced in Egypt, but its frequency, if not its severity, seems to be increasing. In some recent cases, the victims have been family members of suspects. One involved two boys, 9 and 12, who were detained by security forces looking for their older brother. The 12-year-old was beaten on the soles of his feet.

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights is aware that its own survival would probably be attenuated if the extremists came to power. Yet the group has been outspokenly critical of the government's abuses against them, even as it has denounced Islamist violence. On March 20, the organization published a report on Imbaba, a Cairo slum with about a million residents, in which the announcement of an Islamist "rule" urging attacks on Christian churches was followed by a government crackdown on the Islamists. Criticizing both sides, E.O.H.R. pointed out that the government campaign was marked by "collective punishment, the taking of hostages including women and children and the haphazard detention of hundreds of citizens and both temporary disappearances and maltreatment along with wide-scale torture, including sexual abuse, which led to the death of at least one detainee." In reprisal, the government has subjected the group's lawyers and its executive director to surveillance and harassment. (E.O.H.R. has been on the receiving end of Islamist death threats as well.)

Despite the Egyptian government's repressive practices, it has not become the object of significant international censure. President Mubarak was an honored guest at the White House in April, one of the first foreign heads of state to be received there by President Clinton. Press comments on Mubarak's visit had little to say about human rights abuses in Egypt.

In an earlier era the U.S. government justified gross abuses of human rights or looked the other way for fear that condemnation might undermine a government that faced a threat from communist revolutionaries. A global struggle was under way, and what mattered was that the anticommunist side prevail. Today, Islamic extremists are regarded in roughly the same way as the communists were, only more so. Even some who denounced the torturers when communists were the victims seem disinclined to criticize a "moderate" Arab leader whose government faces an Islamist threat.

It is pointless to argue that the Mubarak government may actually be promoting the extremist cause by the means it is using to combat it; perhaps that is the case, perhaps not. The question is whether abuses of human rights should be condemned even when, as may be the case here, they might succeed in crushing an extremist group.

If torture is always wrong, it is wrong also in this case.

