

Summary of seminar held at the House of Lords on human rights abuses and report written by Sir Ivan



The House of Lords hosted a seminar organised by Justice International on 16/10/2007 around Egypt, in an attempt to shed light into the recent human rights abuses in the country. The main feature of the seminar was the report written by Sir Ivan Lawrence QC regarding the recent trial of 32 civilian men in front of military courts, which he himself delivered to those who attended, including Lord Nazir Ahmed, Mr John Grogan MP and others.

Lord Nazir Ahmed made the opening statement in which he asserted the seriousness of the events in Egypt and its possible effects on western relations.

Chairing the meeting, Sir Ivan Lawrence QC then delivered his report which conclusively condemned the trial of civilians in front of military courts especially after the 32 men had received more than two verdicts clearing them from any charges by the Cairo Civilian Criminal, ordering their immediate unconditional release. It gave account of the proceedings surrounding the military courts in which human rights abuses took place, such as the prevention of legal observers prominently the former Attorney General of the United States, the Hon Ramsey Clarke, foreign journalists like Yvonne Ridley, and international human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, from attending the courts. The report also revealed that families of the defendants received harsh restrictions from attending the courts.

Sir Ivan Lawrence QC believes that although he had received no counter evidence from the Egyptian Government to deny the finding of his report, he remains hopeful of a response from the Egyptian Government, as copies of his report were sent to the Egyptian Government, the UK Foreign Office, Members of the UK Parliament, The Human Rights Committee of the UK Parliament, The European Commission for Human Rights, and The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Should the Egyptian Government refuse to comment on the report or take the appropriate action to stop the human rights abuses in the country, Sir Ivan Lawrence QC declared he would push his report to the relevant authorities in the European Court for Human Rights.

The seminar was concluded with an open discussion with all those who attended with topics regarding the human rights abuses in Egypt including the imprisonment of journalists and the unprecedented beating and abuse of judges by the police authorities, in which Sir Ivan Lawrence QC made clear he would investigate in more detail should he be asked to do so and be provided with strong and relevant evidence.