

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 7, 2007

The Honorable Michael Chertoff  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Naval Security Station  
Nebraska and Massachusetts Avenues, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I write to you today with urgent concern regarding the case of Mr. Sameh Khouzam, a resident of Lancaster, PA. Mr. Khouzam, who arrived in the United States in 1998 fleeing religious persecution in Egypt, now faces an order of deportation to Egypt later this month. The U.S. government has apparently secured diplomatic assurances from the Egyptian government that Mr. Khouzam will not be tortured upon his return, but I remain concerned that these assurances are not sufficient to protect his safety. While an emergency stay of Mr. Khouzam's deportation has been extended until June 18<sup>th</sup>, time remains of the essence.

Mr. Khouzam is a Coptic Christian, as are other members of his family. He and his family members have faced years of religious persecution, including detainment and imprisonment, at the hands of the Egyptian government for refusing forcible conversion attempts. He fled Egypt in 1998, and arrived in the United States where he was detained for eight years after being charged by the Egyptian government of murder. The accusation of murder, and the subsequent trial in absentia of Mr. Khouzam in Egypt and his conviction, is a very serious matter, but I am troubled by the lack of due process afforded Mr. Khouzam. Mr. Khouzam was unaware of these murder charges until he arrived in the United States and the Egyptian government has never provided credible evidence, including autopsy reports, regarding this allegation. I should note that his mother has been granted asylum in the United States on the basis that she feared legitimate reprisals and religious persecution were she to return to Egypt.

In 2004, the Second Circuit Court ruled against Mr. Khouzam's deportation on the basis that it was "more likely than not" that he would be tortured upon his return to Egypt and hence represent a violation of the Convention Against Torture, to which the United States is a party. Mr. Khouzam was subsequently released in February 2006 and has been working in Lancaster as the controller for a real estate developer.

Last week, Mr. Khouzam was detained when he voluntarily reported to ICE authorities for a regular check-in. He was informed that the State Department had secured diplomatic assurances from the Egyptian government that he would not be tortured. Accordingly, Mr. Khouzam is currently being held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the York County Prison in Pennsylvania. He secured an emergency petition for a stay of his removal order, but this stay expires tomorrow. When that occurs, his deportation to Egypt could occur at any time.

This is a difficult case and I appreciate the effort of the State Department in securing diplomatic assurances from the Egyptian government regarding Mr. Khouzam. However, I believe that the past record of religious persecution against Mr. Khouzam and his family and previous failures by the Egyptian government to abide by diplomatic assurances on the absence of torture cannot be overlooked. A sufficient number of questions have been raised regarding this case and the likely conduct of the Egyptian government towards Mr. Khouzam that further consideration is required before he is deported. I request your personal attention to halt this pending order of deportation for Mr. Khouzam and help ensure that the United States does not unwittingly abet future torture.

Sincerely,



ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.  
United States Senator