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Public Statement

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Egypt: TV journalist detained for denouncing torture

Ahead of World Press Freedom Day, Amnesty International today called for the immediate and unconditional release of TV journalist and blogger Abdel Moneim Mahmoud. The organization believes he has been arrested and detained solely because of his role in denouncing and publicizing torture and other human rights violations in Egypt.

Abdel Moneim Mahmoud, 27, a blogger and correspondent for the London-based Arabic language TV channel *al-Hiwar* (Dialogue), was arrested on Saturday 14 April 2007 on board a plane that was about to depart from Cairo International Airport. His arrest came after State Security Investigations (SSI) officers raided his parents' home twice in Alexandria earlier on Thursday and Friday in order to arrest him, but did not find him there.

The day following his arrest, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud was brought before the public prosecutor in Shubra al-Khima, north of Cairo. He was charged with membership of the banned Muslim Brotherhood organization; financing student political activities at the Institute of Agricultural Cooperation in Shubra al-Khima and inciting them to stage a quasi-militia style parade; and harming Egypt's image by contacting foreign media and human rights groups to publicize reports of torture in police stations. The Public Prosecutor ordered his detention for 15 days, which was renewed most recently on 24 April 2007, pending further investigation into those charges. He remains in detention in Mahkoum prison in Tora, southeast of Cairo.

In addition to his media work, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud also coordinated a campaign for the release of members of the Muslim Brotherhood whose trial started on 26 April 2007 in Heikstep Military Court Complex outside Cairo. They are being tried by a military court in violation of the most fundamental guarantees for a fair trial. Abdel Moneim Mahmoud has helped the relatives of the defendants contact the media and national and international human rights organizations. As part of these activities, he facilitated and attended a meeting on 12 April 2007 in Cairo between an Amnesty International delegation and some relatives of those facing trial. A few hours after the meeting, SSI officers raided his parents' home in Alexandria.

Amnesty International is also concerned that his involvement in this meeting may have led to his detention. According to his lawyer, a State Security preliminary investigation report (*mahdar al-taharriyat*), referred, among other things, to Abdel Moneim Mahmoud's meeting with AI delegates and his participation a couple of weeks earlier in an anti-torture event in which he spoke out about his detention and torture in 2003. AI delegates raised his case directly with the Egyptian authorities who denied that his detention was in any way connected with his meeting with Amnesty International.

The organization reiterates its call on the Egyptian authorities to investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and bring perpetrators to justice. Detaining those who denounce torture instead will only perpetuate the culture of impunity in Egypt.

Amnesty International considers Abdel Moneim Mahmoud a prisoner of conscience who is being prosecuted solely for his peaceful expression and reporting on torture and other human rights abuses in Egyptian prisons. The organization is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

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