

# URGENT ACTION

## DETAINED PROTESTERS RISK MILITARY TRIALS

**Members of the Central Security Forces and the armed forces, including military police, forcibly dispersed a protest in Tahrir Square in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, on 1 August 2011. Over 80 people are believed to have been arrested, some of whom now risk unfair trials before military courts.**

At around 2pm on 1 August, soldiers and members of the military police, as well as Central Security Force officers, entered Cairo's Tahrir Square to forcibly disperse the sit-in protest that had begun on 8 July demanding that the Egyptian authorities speed up the trial of the former president and others for the deaths of protesters in January and February. Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that the army and the security forces gave no warning before violently attacking protesters with sticks and electric batons, and seemed to target anyone who had a camera or appeared to be filming the events; many were injured.

Lawyers and protesters who were in the Square told Amnesty International that many people were arrested. A list has been compiled by human rights lawyers that includes the names of over 80 people, among them women and children. It is believed that men in civilian clothes helped the officers make the arrests. Lawyers believe that those detained were held in a military camp before being transferred to the military compound that encloses the Military Prosecutor's office. The lawyers fear that the protesters might be tried before military courts. There has been no official confirmation, however, from the Egyptian authorities of the whereabouts of the detainees. It is unclear what they have been charged with, and they have not been given access to their lawyers. Of those arrested, eight were released today by the Military Prosecutor, including all the women, and reports have emerged that detainees were beaten and subjected to electric shocks.

After emptying Tahrir Square of people, officers remained to prevent any further gatherings and continued to make arrests of people reaching the Square. They also destroyed the artwork in the underground station below the square made by artists in the months after Hosni Mubarak's resignation as a symbol of their struggle.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Urging the Egyptian authorities to disclose immediately the whereabouts of those detained on 1 August, grant them access to their families and lawyers of their choice, and ensure that they are protected from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release anyone held for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly; and
- Calling on the authorities to try any of the detainees charged with a recognizably criminal offense in a civilian court, not in military courts.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2011 TO:**

Military General Attorney

Major-General Medhat Radwan

Military Judicial Department

Cairo, Egypt

**Fax: +202 2 412 0980 (ask for fax)**

**Salutation: Dear General Attorney**

Director of Military Judiciary

Major-General Ahmed Abd Allah

Military Judicial Department

Cairo, Egypt

**Fax: +202 2 402 4468 / +202 2 411 3452**

**Salutation: Dear Director**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This is not the first time the army has used force to disperse peaceful protesters, especially in Tahrir Square. In previous incidents on 9 March and 9 April, protesters also reported being beaten and forced out of the Square. In both incidents many were injured and arrested. Those arrested said they were tortured and referred to military trials. More recently, an Amnesty International team in Cairo on 28 June witnessed riot police firing teargas canisters randomly and dispersing protesters in Tahrir Square with sticks and firing shotguns.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has said that 10,000 civilians have been tried by military courts since Hosni Mubarak stepped down. Amnesty International considers such trials to violate fundamental requirements of due process and fair trials and opposes the trial of civilians by military courts.

Following Hosni Mubarak's resignation in February, the families of the victims have been campaigning so that the former President and all those responsible for the deaths of protesters in January and February are held to account. The families have returned to Tahrir Square to express their dissatisfaction with how long the trial process is taking.

Over 840 were killed and thousands injured during the protests of January and February which led to Hosni Mubarak's resignation.

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