

URGENT ACTION

FIRST JAILINGS UNDER NEW PROTEST LAW

Activists Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel, and blogger Ahmed Douma, are facing three years in prison for breaking Egypt's repressive new protest law. Two of the men are prisoners of conscience. The men do not have access to their lawyers or families.

The Abdeen Misdemeanour Court convicted **Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel** and **Ahmed Douma** on 22 December of taking part in an unauthorized protest on 30 November 2013, "attacking the security forces, destroying public property and disturbing public order". The court, sitting at the Tora Police Institute, sentenced the men to three years in prison with hard labour and a fine of LE50,000 (US\$7,185). The men will remain in prison during the appeal process.

The court of appeal convened at the Tora Police Institute on 9 January, but postponed the hearing to 20 January at the request of the defendants' lawyers. The lawyers had asked the court for an extension to get a copy of the full case-file and to hear the defendants' opinions about the case.

The prison authorities have held the men in solitary confinement since their arrest. Lawyers have told Amnesty International that they have not had access to the men since their conviction, despite repeated requests. On 22 December 2013, the men began a series of hunger-strikes in protest at their detention in Tora Prison. Amnesty International considers Ahmed Maher and Ahmed Douma to be prisoners of conscience, and that Mohamed Adel is likely to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Ahmed Maher and Ahmed Douma immediately and unconditionally, and also Mohamed Adel, if he is detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of assembly;
- Urging them to overturn Mohamed Adel's conviction for protesting without authorization, an "offence" contrary to Egypt's obligations under international human rights law, and ensure a fair appeal on the other charges;
- Urging them to release Mohamed Adel on bail pending the completion of his appeal, and failing that, immediately give him access to his legal representatives, families and any medical attention he may require;
- Calling on them to ensure that the detainees are protected from torture and other ill-treatment; and investigate reports that Mohamed Adel faced torture or other ill-treatment during his arrest and detention and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2014 TO:

Public Prosecutor

Hesham Mohamed Zaki Barakat
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House, 1 "26 July" Road
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716
+202 2 575 7165

(switched off after office hours, GMT+2)

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

Interim President

Adly Mahmoud Mansour
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 391 1441

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign

Affairs for Human Rights

Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 574 9713

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 324/13. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/075/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The men are the first to face prison for breaking Egypt's new protest law, which President Adly Mansour signed on 24 November 2013. Under the law, protest organizers must submit their plans to the authorities, who have wide powers to cancel or reroute proposed demonstrations.

Ahmed Maher's supporters staged a protest outside the Abdeen Misdemeanours Court on 30 November 2013, while the activist was being questioned by the Prosecution inside the building about his alleged involvement with an unauthorized protest around the Shura Council on 26 November 2013. Security forces stationed around the court clashed with the protesters, firing teargas to disperse them. Activist Ahmed Douma was also inside the court building when clashes broke out between security forces and protesters, lawyers told Amnesty International. Security forces subsequently arrested both men.

Mohamed Adel was arrested on 18 December 2013 after the security forces raided the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR). Mohamed Adel told his lawyers that he was beaten during his arrest and while being held in an unknown location. Mohamed Adel's whereabouts were not known until the day of the trial on 22 December.

In a series of letters smuggled from prison and published in part by *The Huffington Post*, Ahmed Maher described being "forbidden to read or write", eating stale food and suffering from the cold in the cells.

The trial is the latest in a widening crackdown on critics of Egypt's interim authorities. Prisoners of conscience Abdel Fattah and Ahmed Abdel Rahman also remain detained while the Prosecution investigates accusations that they participated in the unauthorized protest outside the Shura Council. On 5 January 2014, a court handed down suspended sentences to 12 people accused of attacking and burning the headquarters of a former presidential candidate. Those convicted included Alaa Abdel Fattah, anti-military trials activist Mona Seif, and 6 April Youth Movement figure Ahmed Abdallah. Amnesty International considered the trial to be politically motivated as it was based on unreliable witnesses and scant evidence.

Thousands of supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi also remain in detention, many after taking part in protests against the authorities. A court convicted 21 female protesters on 28 November 2013 of participating in a peaceful pro-Morsi protest in Alexandria: of the 21, it sentenced 14 women to prison terms and seven girls to custody in juvenile detention facilities. An appeals court later reduced the punishment to suspended sentences for the women and probation for the girls. The authorities declared on 25 December that the Muslim Brotherhood, to which Mohamed Morsi is closely linked, was a "terrorist organization". The move is likely to lead to further moves against the movement.

Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel belong to the 6 April Youth Movement, an activist opposition group with thousands of members. It is best-known for helping to co-ordinate the mass protests that toppled Hosni Mubarak during the "25 January Revolution" in 2011.

Name: Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel and Ahmed Douma
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 324/13 Index: MDE 12/002/2014 Issue Date: 13 January 2014