

URGENT ACTION

THREE JAILED FOR “UNAUTHORIZED PROTEST”

Prisoners of conscience Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel and Ahmed Douma will serve three years in prison with labour, after an appeal court upheld their conviction on 7 April for taking part in an “unauthorized protest”.

As well as the three-year prison sentence, the court also upheld a 50,000 Egyptian pound (US\$7,185) fine and ruled that the men should serve a further three years' probation following their release.

The men are the first Egyptians to be sentenced to prison for defying the country's repressive protest law, adopted in November last year.

Defence lawyers have told Amnesty International they will now try to challenge the judgement before the Court of Cassation, Egypt's highest court of law.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA: 324/13. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/002/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel are members of the 6 April Youth Movement, an activist opposition group with thousands of members. Ahmed Douma is a well-known blogger.

The three men had been convicted by the Abdeen Misdemeanours Court on 22 December 2013 of taking part in an unauthorized demonstration around the court building three weeks earlier, in which security forces had clashed with protesters.

Ahmed Maher's supporters had protested around the court on 30 November, when the activist turned himself in for questioning by the Prosecution, over allegations that he had taken part in an unauthorized demonstration around the Shura Council. The security forces tried to disperse the demonstration with teargas and clashed with some of the protesters.

The security forces arrested both Ahmed Maher and Ahmed Douma at the court, though defence lawyers told Amnesty International that both men had been inside the court building at the time of the violence. They arrested Mohamed Adel on 18 December after raiding a human rights organization, the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights.

The security forces are reported to have subjected the men to beatings inside the court building. Both Mohamed Adel and Ahmed Douma showed marks of beatings on their hands, legs and stomachs during the appeal hearing. They told the judge that the security forces had beaten them in the holding cell in the court before they entered the courtroom for their trial. The three men were beaten after they asked the security forces to remove their metal handcuffs. Mohamed Adel also told his lawyers that the security forces had beaten him during his arrest in November 2013 and subsequent detention.

The trial is the latest in a widening crackdown on critics of Egypt's interim authorities. A Cairo court is also trying a group of 25 other activists on charges of protesting without authorization around the Shura Council on 26 November 2013. Supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi have also faced trial after taking part in protests against the authorities. On 28 November, a court convicted 21 female protesters 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 appeal court later reduced the punishment to suspended sentences for the women and probation for the girls.

Under Egypt's Law Regulating the Right to Public Gatherings, Processions and Peaceful Protests (Law 107 of 2013), protest organizers must submit their plans to the authorities, who have wide powers to cancel or reroute proposed demonstrations. President Adly Mansour signed the law on 24 November 2013.

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

Further information on UA: 324/13 Index: MDE 12/018/2014 Issue Date: 8 April 2014