

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN JAILED FOR CAMPUS PROTESTS

University students Abrar Al-Anany and Menatalla Moustafa, and teacher Yousra Elkhateeb, were sentenced to jail on 21 May for protesting peacefully. They are prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

The Mansoura Criminal Court sentenced 18-year-old students **Abrar Al-Anany** and **Menatalla Moustafa** to two years in prison for their involvement in a protest at Mansoura University on 12 November 2013 that turned violent. The court sentenced 21-year-old teacher **Yousra Elkhateeb** to six years in prison for taking part in the protest, as well as an earlier demonstration on 29 October 2013, in which her lawyers provided evidence that she had not taken part.

The court found the women guilty of protesting without authorization, belonging to a banned organization that uses “terrorist methods”, “thuggery”, attacking the security forces and destroying public property. Eyewitnesses and university security officials had testified that the three women had not been involved in the clashes.

The women were not in court to hear the verdict and only found out about it four days later, after their families visited them in Mansoura Public Prison. They may now challenge their conviction before Egypt’s highest court, the Court of Cassation.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Amnesty International will monitor the women’s situation and take further campaigning action as necessary. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 93/14. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/021/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The court handed down its verdict in the absence of any of the defendants, who were not brought to court. A defence lawyer told Amnesty International that the security forces did not allow the women's relatives to enter the court to hear the sentencing, and later fired tear gas to disperse a crowd angered by the verdict.

The women are detained in Mansoura Public Prison, where they are allowed a five-minute visit from their families once a week.

The clashes at Mansoura University on 12 November 2013 broke out during a protest held by student supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. They lasted more than five hours and left at least 70 people injured. After university security guards tried and failed to take control of the situation the university president called on the security forces to intervene. They went into the university campus with armoured vehicles and fired tear gas to disperse the students: they arrested at least 23 students, including the three women.

According to witnesses and their lawyers, the three women were not involved in the clashes. They had taken part in protests peacefully but sought safety in a room at the university's faculty of pharmacy as soon as the clashes began. Amnesty International has seen a copy of a letter from the security department at Mansoura University to the public prosecutor stating that the women did not take part in the violence and asking for their release.

Since the beginning of the academic year in September 2013, several protests have been held on university campuses by the anti-government activist group Students Against The Coup. There have been frequent clashes in university campuses and even dormitories.

Universities across Egypt have been affected by protests and clashes, including Greater Cairo's two largest universities, Cairo University and Ain Shams. Al-Azhar University is a centre of student unrest. The security forces have used excessive force, including lethal force, to disperse the protests.

A protest law restricting the right to public assembly, signed by interim President Adly Mansour on 24 November 2013, falls short of international standards. It gives the Interior Ministry wide discretionary powers over protests, including the use of firearms against peaceful protesters. Protesters convicted of breaking the law can face up to five years in prison and fines of 100,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$14,513).

Names: Abrar Al-Anany, Menatalla Moustafa, Yousra Elkhateeb

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 93/14 Index: MDE 12/029/2014 Issue Date: 30 May 2014