URGENT ACTION

PHOTOJOURNALIST HELD A YEAR WITHOUT CHARGE

Freelance Egyptian photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zied has been detained in Egypt without charge or trial for over a year. The prosecutor is next due to interrogate him on 2 October. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his journalistic work.

Mahmoud Abu Zied, also known as "Shawkan", was arrested on 14 August 2013 at a sit-in protest at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square by supporters of Egypt's ousted president Mohamed Morsi. He was arrested in Al-Tayaran Street while taking photographs around Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in the Cairo district of Nasr City, while the security forces were violently dispersing the sit-in. Mahmmoud Abu Zied, who has worked as a freelance photojournalist for more than six years, was a contributor for the London-based photo agency Demotix at the time.

Along with others arrested that day, Mahmoud Abu Zied was held in Cairo stadium and later transferred to various police stations. He was questioned on 16 August by a prosecutor, without a lawyer present. He was sent to Abu Zaabal Prison on 20 August, and finally to Tora Prison in December 2013 where he is still detained pending the completion of the investigation.

Mahmoud Abu Zied could face charges of belonging to a banned group, murder and possessing firearms. His detention has been extended repeatedly, pending the outcome of the investigation. The prosecutor extended his detention for a further 45 days, on 28 August 2014. These charges would be completely unfounded and he has been detained for over a year solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Mahmoud Abu Zied was beaten upon arrest and while being transferred to Abu Zaabal prison on 17 August, according to reliable sources. He suffers from anaemia and needs to have access to medical care.

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

■   Urging the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against Mahmoud Abu Zied and release him immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
■   Calling on them to protect Mahmoud Abu Zied from torture and other ill-treatment;
■   Calling on them to order independent and impartial investigations into reports that he was beaten in custody and bring those found responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 NOVEMBER 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+3)

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

Minister of Justice
Mahfouz Saber
Ministry of Justice
Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 795 8103
Email: mojeb@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President of the National Council for Human Rights
Mohamed Fayek
69 Giza St. – next to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 3 762 4852

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.

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Additional Information

Mahmoud Abu Zied is a freelance photojournalist, professionally known as "Shawkan", who has contributed to a range of Egyptian and foreign publications, such as the US magazine Time, German newspaper Die Zeit, and online photo agencies, including Demotix. He is not known to have taken part in any protests or political violence.

After Mohamed Morsi was ousted on 3 July 2013, Mahmoud Abu Zied began taking photos of a large sit-in staged by the former president's' supporters in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square, Nasr City, Cairo. Egyptian security forces used excessive, including lethal, force to disperse the sit-in on 14 August, killing hundreds of people. In the ensuing violence, eight members of the security forces also died.

According to information available to Amnesty International, Mahmoud Abu Zied was beaten by police and soldiers during his first day under arrest and on 17 August when he was transferred to Abu Zaabal Prison. Officers reportedly punched and kicked him, and beat him with sticks. He was also kept in a parked truck for eight hours in very high temperature when he got to Abu Zaabal Prison.

The Egyptian authorities have continued to crack down on journalists covering pro-Morsi demonstrations, as well as those they see as supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights uphold the right of all individuals to freedom of expression. This right includes "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

Name: Mahmoud Abu Zied
Gender m/f: m

UA: 243/14 Index: MDE 12/052/2014 Issue Date: 29 September 2014