

URGENT ACTION

TRIAL OF WITNESSES TO KILLING CONTINUES

Women's rights defender Azza Soliman and 16 other people who witnessed the killing of Egyptian activist Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh in a peaceful march forcibly dispersed by security forces are due in court for their second hearing on 23 May. They are charged with illegal protest and could face up to five years in jail.

Women's rights defender **Azza Soliman's** lawyer has demanded that she be considered a witness and not a defendant, according to the organization she heads, the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance. Her lawyer also demanded that testimony from a Danish witness, who was in the café with Azza Soliman when activist Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh was killed after security forces forcibly dispersed a peaceful commemorative march, be officially translated by the Ministry of Justice for use as evidence. Cairo's Abdeen Misdemeanour Court is expected to respond and make a decision on 23 May to demands made by lawyers for the 17 people whose trial began on 9 May. They are being charged with protesting without permission, an offence under Egypt's draconian Protest Law, and disturbing public order.

Lawyers for 16 other defendants made three demands: the court must acknowledge that the constitutionality of the Protest Law is being challenged in the Constitutional Court; it must ensure that the charges against those who killed the activist, Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh, and those who witnessed the killing be heard together, not separated as they are now; the videos and photo material included in the case file that now only focuses on the killing of Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh must also include images of the protest to show whether it was peaceful or not.

Seventeen people came forward as eyewitnesses to the fatal shooting of 32-year-old woman, Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh, on 24 January during a peaceful march in central Cairo commemorating those who died during the "25 January Revolution". Six were arrested that day. All 17 eyewitnesses are now being charged in what is seen as an attempt by the authorities to shield security forces from accountability. They could be jailed for up to five years.

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

■ Calling on the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against the 17 defendants (naming them), as they stem from their exercise of the right to peaceful assembly and appear to be retribution for providing testimony about arbitrary detention and excessive use of force by members of the security forces.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 JULY 2015 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
(only in office hours, GMT+2)
Salutation: Dear Counsellor

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 391 1441
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Moh_moussa@op.gov.eg
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
Email: Contact.US@mfa.gov.eg

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 80/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/1404/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activist Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh was shot on 24 January during a peaceful commemorative march in central Cairo forcibly dispersed by Egyptian security forces. Video footage and photographs, taken by journalists and activists, have sparked widespread outrage in Egypt and beyond.

Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh had been taking part in a peaceful commemorative march to Tahrir Square by the leftist political party Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPAP). The small group of around 30 marchers had been carrying a banner with the party's name, as well as flowers to pay tribute to the hundreds who died during the 2011 uprising. They marched on the sidewalk to avoid blocking traffic. Under Egypt's draconian Protest Law, participating in a demonstration without prior authorization is a crime. However, the participants in the march maintain that they were not protesting, rather they were marching to commemorate those who died.

An eyewitness has told Amnesty International that the security forces guarding the entrance to Tahrir Square had stopped the march in nearby Talaat Harb Street before opening fire on the protesters with shotguns and tear gas.

According to the head of Egypt's Forensic Authority, Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh died from injuries caused by birdshot fired into her back and the back of her head from eight metres away. While the authorities initially denied that the security forces were responsible for her death, the Public Prosecution has since charged a member of the security forces with "beating, injury or giving harmful substances that led to death" of Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh. The officer has also been placed in preventive detention, according to one of the defence lawyers of the 16 defendants.

Azza Soliman, founder of the NGO Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, said in her testimony that she had not been part of the march, but had been sitting in a café with her family and friends. She heard the marchers chanting and went outside to see. She saw the security forces breaking up the march with tear gas and shotguns. She also saw a body in the street, which she learned was that of Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh. Two others now on trial were not involved in the march. One is a doctor, who offered first aid to Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh after she was shot; the second is a bystander who carried Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh to a nearby café for safety. Both were arrested at the scene. The remaining 14 defendants were part of the peaceful commemorative march. Some were arrested at the scene, and others went to testify after being summoned by the Public Prosecutor. One man was accused of killing Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh after offering his eyewitness testimony. When no evidence was found against him, he was instead charged with protesting illegally and disturbing public order.

Names: Azza Soliman, Nagwa Abbas, Maher Shaker, Mostafa Abdelaal, Sayed Abu El Ela, Elhami El Merghany, Adel El Meleegy, Mohamed Ahmed Mahmoud, Zohdy El Shamy, Ahmed Fathy Nasr, Talaat Fahmy, Taha Tantawi, Abdel Hameed Mostafa Nada, Mohamed Saleh Fathy, Hossam Nasr, Mohamed Saleh, Khaled Mostafa.

Gender m/f: All male except Azza Soliman and Nagwa Abbas

Further information on UA: 80/15 Index: MDE 12/1712/2015 Issue Date: 22 May 2015