

URGENT ACTION

TRIAL OF AZZA SOLIMAN TO BEGIN 24 OCTOBER

The trial of women's human rights defender Azza Soliman and 16 others, who witnessed the killing of an activist in Cairo, has been set for 24 October.

The trial of **Azza Soliman and 16 other eyewitnesses** will be held on 24 October at the Qasr al-Nil Appeal Court. The defendants are facing up to five years in jail and a fine of up to 200,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$25,500) because they witnessed the killing of activist Shaimaa al-Sabbagh in Cairo during a peaceful march commemorating those who died during the "25 January Revolution". Azza Soliman was purely an eyewitness, a second defendant was a bystander who carried Shaimaa al-Sabbagh to a nearby café for safety, a third is a doctor who came to the aid of the mortally wounded Shaimaa al-Sabbagh and the remaining 14 had joined the peaceful march.

A new judge has been assigned to the case and the lawyers representing the 17 defendants have been asked to prepare their defence once again as October is the start of Egypt's new judicial year and the final court hearing, initially due on 26 September, was postponed.

Although the 17 defendants were acquitted on 23 May of "protesting illegally" and "disturbing public order" under Egypt's draconian Protest Law, three days later the Public Prosecutor appealed and a retrial began. The authorities initially denied that the security forces were responsible for the death of Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, but on 11 June police officer Yassin Hatem Salahdeen was sentenced to 15 years in jail for "beating that led to death". Despite this, Azza Soliman and the 16 other eyewitnesses are still facing charges because they witnessed this crime.

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 have been charged for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and as retribution for testifying about abuses carried out by the security forces;
- Calling on the Public Prosecutor to withdraw the appeal.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

Public Prosecutor

Nabil Sadek
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House
1 "26 July" Road
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716
(only during 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
Cornice 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 sixth update of UA 80/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2504/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The final hearing in the trial of Azza Soliman and 16 other eyewitnesses, which had been due on 26 September, was delayed by the five-day Eid al-Adha public holiday that began on 23 September. After this delay, and because October is the start of the new judicial calendar, a new judge was appointed to the case.

The case dates back to 24 January 2015 when a group of activists from the Socialist Popular Alliance Party peacefully marched to Cairo's Tahrir Square to commemorate those who had died there four years earlier, during the "25 January Revolution".

An eyewitness has told Amnesty International that the security forces guarding the entrance to Tahrir Square had stopped the march in nearby Tala'at 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 shotgun pellets fired into her back and the back of her head from eight metres away. Video footage and photographs of the leftist activist's killing, taken by journalists and activists, sparked widespread outrage in Egypt and beyond.

Under Egypt's Law Regulating the Right to Public Gatherings, Processions and Peaceful Protests (Law 107 of 2013), taking part in a gathering or demonstration of 10 or more people without prior authorization by the Interior Ministry is a crime. Protesters convicted of breaking the law face up to five years in prison and fines of up to 200,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$25,500). However, those who took part in the march have maintained that they were not demonstrating, but marching to commemorate those who died.

Azza Soliman, founder of the NGO Centre 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. None of the defendants is in jail, but they all risk being imprisoned and fined when the verdict is issued.

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 12/2595/2015 Issue Date: 5 October 2015