

URGENT ACTION

SHAWKAN'S TRIAL TO BEGIN ON 12 DECEMBER

The trial of photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid, known as Shawkan, has been set for 12 December. He will be tried on charges stemming from his journalism. He is a prisoner of conscience.

The first session of **Mahmoud Abu Zeid's** trial will be on 12 December, at the Cairo Criminal Court, according to Egyptian media reports. He was arrested on 14 August 2013 while photographing the violent dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in in Cairo. He has since been held for longer than the maximum pre-trial detention period of two years that is provided for by Article 143 of the Egyptian Code of Criminal Procedures. He is the only Egyptian journalist to have been held beyond the ceiling of pre-trial detention.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid is facing the same trumped-up charges as 738 others on trial with him, without consideration of his individual criminal responsibility. He is facing charges that include "belonging to a banned group" (in reference to the Muslim Brotherhood), "murder", "vandalizing private and public property" and "possessing firearms and 'cold steel'". Mahmoud Abu Zeid denied having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and all the other charges when the prosecutor questioned him in 2013. His lawyers have told Amnesty International that more than a month has passed since the Public Prosecutor referred the case to the criminal court, on 11 August, but they are still being denied access to key documents related to the case, including the prosecutor's referral decision which includes a list of charges and Penal Code provisions applicable in the case. This has made it difficult for them to prepare their client's defence.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid is still being denied access to medication, despite his deteriorating health caused by Hepatitis C. His family have appealed at least 17 times to the prosecutor to release him on medical grounds, without success.

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

- Urging the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against Mahmoud Abu Zeid and release him immediately as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to grant his lawyers access to the casefile immediately, including the Prosecutor Referral Decision and other key documents in the casefile, so they can prepare his defence;
- Calling on them to provide Mahmoud Abu Zeid with any medical attention he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

Public Prosecutor
Nabil Sadeq
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House
1 "26 July" Road Cairo
Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716 (only during office hours, GMT +2)
Salutation: Dear Counsellor

Minister of the Interior
Magdy Abdel Ghaffar
Ministry of the Interior
25 El Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo
Egypt
Fax: +202 2 794 5529
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights
Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
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 third update of UA 243/14. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/2315/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahmoud Abu Zeid is a freelance photojournalist who was arrested while on an assignment for the British photo agency Demotix when covering the violent dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in by the Egyptian security forces on 14 August 2013. The agency has told the Prosecutor's Office that he was working with them at the time, but he is still detained.

His detention order has been renewed continually since his arrest, to allow for questioning and ongoing investigations by the Public Prosecution. The Egyptian Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP) allows for people to be held in pre-trial detention for up to six months if charged with misdemeanours, or 18 months if charged with felonies, and two years if the alleged offence is punishable by life imprisonment or death (Article 143 of the CCP).

Mahmoud Abu Zeid's detention has exceeded the pre-trial detention limit under Egyptian law. His lawyers have submitted an appeal to the court of appeal for him to be released immediately for this reason. Despite this, he is still held without charge.

He was arrested on 14 August 2013 and held at a police station in Cairo before being transferred to Abu Zaabal Prison. He was beaten upon arrest and when he was transferred between different police stations, in what are called "welcoming parties". He is now held in an overcrowded cell with poor ventilation in Tora Prison. In April 2015, he wrote a letter published by Amnesty International describing the appalling conditions and referred to his indefinite detention as "psychologically unbearable".

Since the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, Egyptian journalists and media workers have been detained or faced criminal investigations for being critical of the authorities and their human rights record. The authorities have rounded up critical and opposition-linked journalists on trumped-up charges of broadcasting "false news, information or rumours", as well as sedition and incitement to violence. At least 18 journalists and other media workers are now detained in Egypt, according to Amnesty International's research. Most of the journalists who have been arrested had documented human rights violations, criticized the security forces or government, or simply photographed the police or army. Several worked for outlets known for their support of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood movement while a few others appear to have been caught up in the continued rift between Egypt and Qatar, which had strongly backed Mohamed Morsi's administration.

Name: Mahmoud Abd Al Shakur Abu Zeid ("Shawkan")

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 243/14 Index: MDE 12/2534/2015 Issue Date: 28 September 2015