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Egypt: Release of blogger Maikel Nabil is the end of a “cruel ordeal”

The release of an Egyptian blogger and prisoner of conscience whose trial was flagrantly unfair comes months too late, Amnesty International said today.

“The end of Maikel Nabil’s cruel ordeal at the hands of the military council is a cause for real celebration,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director.

“Yet 10 months of Maikal’s life have been wasted. He should never have been arrested in the first place. His criminal record must now be expunged and he must be compensated for his ordeal.”

“Throughout his trial the Egyptian authorities have behaved with a total lack of respect for his rights. At times they seemed to toy with his life, allowing his health to deteriorate so badly that many feared for his life.”

“The SCAF should have freed Maikel Nabil long ago. It is shameful that they apparently have only done so now to try to avoid criticism on the anniversary of Jan 25.”

After the blogger’s arrest at his home in Cairo on 28 March, a military court sentenced him on 10 April to three years in prison over his criticism of the Egyptian military’s use of force against protesters in Tahrir Square and his objection to military service.

After he went on hunger strike in August, surviving only on liquids, his weight plummeted and prison authorities denied him the medication he needs to treat a heart condition.

Throughout his trials the military court refused to release Maikel Nabil Sanad even temporarily to receive medical treatment.

In December he was convicted to two years imprisonment in a retrial. On 21 January the SCAF announced that he would be pardoned, along with up to 2000 other prisoners convicted by military tribunals.

In August, the SCAF admitted that some 12,000 civilians across the country had been tried by military courts following grossly unfair trials. At least 13 have been sentenced to death.

Amnesty International said that military trials violate fundamental requirements of due process and fair trials.

“It is shocking that more civilians have been tried before military courts under the SCAF in one year than under Mubarak’s entire 30-year rule,” said Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui.