

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 12/029/2009

22 July 2009

Egypt: Government should immediately release Musaad Abu Fagr and Karim Amer

Amnesty International is calling on President Hosni Mubarak to order the immediate and unconditional release of Musaad Abu Fagr and Karim Amer, prisoners of conscience who have both been held for more than 18 months. Musaad Abu Fagr continues to be detained without charge or trial despite repeated court orders for his release, while a leading UN human rights body has declared Karim Amer's imprisonment "arbitrary" and called for his release.

Musaad Abu Fagr, whose real name is Musaad Suliman Hassan Hussein, is a novelist, human rights activist and founder of the Sinai-based movement *Wedna Na'ish* (We Want to Live). He was arrested in December 2007 following demonstrations in al-Arish, North Sinai involving *Wedna Na'ish* supporters and others who were demanding the permits to build houses, title to the farmland they work, and the release of Bedouin who had been detained without charge or trial after bomb attacks in Taba, Sharm al-Sheikh and Dahab between 2004 and 2006. Two courts in al-Arish acquitted him of "inciting protests" and "resisting the authorities" in February 2008 but he was then served with an administrative detention order issued by the Minister of the Interior using powers provided under Egypt's long-running state of emergency legislation. Lawyers from the Hisham Mubarak Law Center have since obtained several court orders for his release, most recently in June 2009, but these have been effectively ignored by State Security Investigations (SSI) officials who have continued to detain him in breach of the law. He is now being held on his thirteenth successive administrative detention order. This was imposed after a court ordered his release in June; SSI officials in al-Arish failed to comply with the court order, detaining him illegally for several days until a new administrative detention order was issued by the Interior Minister. On 18 July, he was transferred to Borg al-Arab Prison, near Alexandria.

Karim Amer, a blogger who was sentenced to four years in prison in 2007, is also held at Borg al-Arab Prison. He too is a prisoner of conscience. He was tried and imprisoned for criticizing President Mubarak and Egypt's al-Azhar religious authorities in his blog. He was convicted of "inciting strife and defaming Muslims on the internet by describing the Prophet of Islam and his comrades as murderers, which disturbs national peace"; and "insulting the President of the Republic by writing on the internet".

In November 2008, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) declared Karim Amer's detention "arbitrary" on the grounds that it violates freedoms guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and that he should be released. Following this, SSI officers at the prison have prevented Karim Amer's lawyers from the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information from visiting him – they were last able to see him in March 2009, when they were able to inform him of the WGAD decision in his case. In May, when denying Karim Amer's lawyers access to him, one SSI officer is reported to have told them, "Let the United Nations help you!" Last week, the lawyers were again denied access to him. This has promoted increased concern for his safety. He was previously assaulted by prison guards in October 2007 and placed in solitary confinement for allegedly assaulting another inmate.

Amnesty International is calling on President Mubarak to order the immediate release of Musaad Abu Fagr, Karim Amer and all other prisoners of conscience in Egypt, and to curb the

powers of the SSI and ensure that SSI officials who breach the law or are responsible for abusing prisoners are brought to justice.

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