

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS' APPEAL TO BE HEARD IN OCTOBER

Fourteen journalists sentenced to life imprisonment and one sentenced to death, in an unfair trial, will have their appeal heard on 1 October. They were convicted of politically motivated charges, including “broadcasting false information”.

A Cairo criminal court sentenced 14 journalists on 11 April to life imprisonment (25 years) for “broadcasting false information”, which is not recognized as a criminal offence under international law; and “inciting violence against the security forces that led to attacks on state institutions”. The court sentenced another journalist to death for “creating media committees to spread false information around the situation in the country” and “leading and funding a banned group” (the Muslim Brotherhood). The 15 men were part of a group of 51 accused of running an “operations room” at the sit-in in Cairo’s Rabaa al-Adawiya Square that also included leading Muslim Brotherhood officials. The Rabaa al-Adaweya sit-in was staged by former president Mohamed Morsi’s supporters in Cairo after he was ousted in July 2013. The security forces violently dispersed the sit-in on 14 August, killing hundreds of protesters.

According to the casefile, the journalists denied all the charges when they were questioned by the prosecutor. The only evidence against them in the casefile was books written by Islamic political figures, plans to organise peaceful protests after the violent dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adaweya sit-in and some business cards with the logo of the Muslim Brotherhood’s political party, the Freedom and Justice Party. Further, the court relied entirely on investigations by the Ministry of Interior’s National Security Department (NS), which is responsible for investigating all “terrorism” related offences in the country and is known for extracting confessions under torture from people it is holding under conditions of enforced disappearance.

Many of the journalists had been arrested without a warrant, not referred to the prosecutor within 24 hours for questioning as required by law, and tried in a court inside the prison, undermining the presumption of innocence. They were also questioned by the NS and the prosecutor without their lawyers present. Their lawyers lodged an appeal, which will be heard on 1 October by Egypt’s highest court, the court of cassation.

Please write immediately in English and Arabic:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure the criminal court’s verdict on the 15 journalists (naming them) is quashed, and release the 15 journalists or else retry them in proceedings that meet international standards without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging them to ensure that information obtained unlawfully, including statements taken while the men were questioned without their lawyers present, is not used as evidence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

Minister of Justice

Ahmed El-Zend

Lazoughly Square, Ministry of Justice,

Down Town, Cairo

Egypt

Fax: +20227958103

Email: info@moj.gov.eg

Salutation: Dear Minister

Public Prosecutor

Nabil Sadek

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

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.

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS' APPEAL TO BE HEARD IN OCTOBER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The criminal court sentenced journalist **Waleed Shalaby**, from the official newspaper of the Freedom and Justice Party, to death for creating and overseeing media committees at the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in to spread "false information" that resulted in attacks on state institutions. It also convicted him of "leading and funding a banned group" (the Muslim brotherhood).

Those sentenced to life imprisonment include Amgad TV presenter **Mohamed Eladly** and Rassd News journalists **Abdallah Alfakhrany** and **Samhi Mostafa**. The three men were arrested on 25 August 2013 when the security forces raided the house of Muslim Brotherhood official Salah Soltan. The journalists had been visiting his son, Mohamed Soltan, who was also arrested. The security forces did not have a prosecutor's warrant to search the house or to arrest anyone, but they arrested the four men and took them to Cairo's Basateen Police Station. When the men asked why they had been arrested, one security officer told them, "stay here and we will find some accusations against you". The security forces beat the men as part of "welcoming parties" after transferring them to different police stations and prisons. They are now held in Wadi al-Natroun Prison (92 Km North of Cairo). Al-Aqsa Channel head **Ahmed Sebeh** was also sentenced to life imprisonment. He was arrested at his home on 4 October 2013 and taken to Helwan Police Station in Greater Cairo. He remained there for 13 months while the Public Prosecution repeatedly renewed his detention order, without charge. During this time, prosecutors questioned him and the security forces searched the Al-Aqsa Channel's offices in Cairo, confiscating equipment, cameras and tapes. Ahmed Sebeh's defence lawyers told Amnesty International that the Public Prosecution had later formally concluded that the confiscated material had no link with the Muslim Brotherhood and did not mention the political situation in Egypt.

Mosaad Elbarbary, the head of Ahrar 25 Channel, was sentenced to life imprisonment. Lebanon's security forces arrested him on 2 April 2014, apparently at the request of the Egyptian authorities, and detained him for five days in Beirut's General Security Prison. Lebanese and Egyptian security officials took him to the airport five days later and put him on a plane to Egypt. When he arrived, the security forces took him to Tarhelat al-Giza Prison, where the NS questioned him over what would become the "Rabaa Operations Room" case. He is now in Wadi al-Natroun Prison. The security forces arrested **Hani Salah Eldin**, the former head of the Youm7 news website and member of Egypt's Press Syndicate, on 28 November 2014 at Cairo Airport. Police questioned him at Nasr City Police Station before transferring him to al-Aqrab Prison. Officials at the prison held him in solitary confinement for five months and then transferred him to Tora Liman Prison. According to his family, a prosecutor did not question him until 21 days after his arrest, even though the Egyptian constitution requires that detainees be brought before the Public Prosecution within 24 hours of arrest. The court also jailed Al-Karama journalist **Hassan Al Kabany**; Ikhwanweb journalist **Khaled Hamza**; Ikhwanwiki head **Abdo Mostafa Desouky**; and television presenter **Youssef Talaat**. The court sentenced a number of journalists in their absence: Rassd News website head **Amr Farag**; Ikhwan Online journalist **Magdy Abdelatif**; freelance journalist **Ibrahim Eltaher**; and al-Mokhtar al-Islamy web journalist **Gamal Nassar**.

Since the ousting of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013 Egypt's journalists and media workers have been detained or faced criminal investigations for their independent reporting and challenging what the authorities say. 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 20 journalists and other media workers are now detained in Egypt, according to Amnesty International's research. Most of the journalists arrested had documented human rights violations, criticized the security forces or government, or had simply photographed the police or army. Several worked for outlets known for their support of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood movement. A few others appear to have been caught up in the split between Egypt and Qatar, which had strongly backed Mohamed Morsi's administration.

Names: Waleed Shalaby, Mohamed Eladly, Abdallah Alfakhrany, Samhi Mostafa, Ahmed Sebeh, Mosaad Elbarbary, Hani Salah Eldin, Hassan Al Kabany, Khaled Hamza, Abdo Mostafa Desouky, Youssef Talaat, Amr Farag, Magdy Abdelatif, Ibrahim Eltaher, Gamal Nassar
Gender m/f: m