

URGENT ACTION

STRIKING WORKERS HELD BY MILITARY POLICE

Five men working at the Sumid Arab Petroleum Pipeline Factory in the Egyptian port of Suez have been arrested after taking part in a strike. They may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising their right to assemble freely and their right to strike. They could face an unfair military trial.

Mahmoud Farouk Aljundi, Ahmed Mohamed Talaat, Mohamed Issam Syam, Abu Al Yazid Abdul Atti and Hassan Ahmed Al Armouti were arrested by the military police on 7 March. They were among over 100 workers at the Sumid plant, which also operates as a privately-run port, who had decided to go on strike over their working conditions and lack of job security. The men were taken to Ataka police station in Suez, where they are still being held. According to information received by Amnesty International, military police officers beat the five men when they arrested them and on their arrival at the police station, as well as forced them to take off their clothes, in an apparent attempt to humiliate them. One of the men is believed to have received hospital treatment for a broken rib as a result of beating.

The five men have been accused of “disrupting navigation in the Suez Canal”, “blocking a naval base”, “disrupting the work of a public port” and “insulting the armed forces”. Their lawyers believe the charges to be trumped-up and the arrest and detention of the men to be designed as a message to scare other workers from going on strike again. The military prosecution in Suez initially ordered their detention for 15 days for investigation but this was renewed several times and they have now spent over 40 days in detention. Besides an initial interrogation, their families and lawyers are not aware that the authorities are continuing to investigate the case. The men could face a trial before a military court. Military trials violate some of the basic guarantees of a fair trial, as among other things they do not give defendants the right to make an effective appeal. Amnesty International opposes the trial of civilians before military courts.

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

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mahmoud Farouk Aljundi, Ahmed Mohamed Talaat, Mohamed Issam Syam, Abu Al Yazid Abdul Atti and Hassan Ahmed Al Armouti if they have been arrested solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly and their right to strike;
- Calling for an investigation into reports of ill-treatment of the men in custody; with the results made public and those found responsible brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to ensure the men are protected from torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MAY 2012 TO:

Director of Military Judiciary
Major-General Adel Al-Morsi
Military Judicial Department
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2412 0980 (may be switched off outside office hours:2
hours ahead of GMT)
Salutation: Dear Major General

Leader of the Supreme Council of the
Armed Forces
Field Marshal Muhammad Tantawi
Ministry of Defence and Military Production
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 291 6227 ((may be switched off during office hours:2
hours ahead of GMT)
Salutation: Dear Field Marshal

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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The workers in the private company Sumid Arab Petroleum Pipeline Factory in Suez went on strike on 7 March 2012 demanding better job security. Their demands include direct employment by Sumid Factory instead of the current situation where they are employed through a subcontracting company on contracts and given temporary contracts. Many have complained of being treated as temporary workers although they have worked for the company for more than 20 years. Following the example of workers in other factories and companies, the workers decided to go on strike after their demands continued to go unheeded.

The military police first tried to enter the Sumid plant by sea but failed when the workers, following company security regulations, denied anyone access. Other military police then arrived by car, dispersed the demonstration and arrested the five workers. The strike lasted for only two hours.

Following their arrest on 7 March, the military prosecution ordered the detention of Mahmoud Farouk Aljundi, Ahmed Mohamed Talaat, Mohamed Issam Syam, Abu Al Yazid Abdul Atti and Hassan Ahmed Al Armouti for 15 days pending investigations. This was renewed for another 15 days on 21 March and then for a further 10 days on 5 April. The last renewal on 15 April was for a further 15 days. During this time, the company has withheld all of the men's monthly wages although by law they are only allowed to withhold a quarter of their wage. As the men are the main breadwinners for their families, the families are in difficult financial circumstances.

Workers have continued to protest since the 2011 uprising to demand their rights despite a law passed by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces in April 2011 (Law 34 of 2011) criminalizing strikes and any other form of protest deemed to obstruct work and imposing prison sentences and heavy fines on those convicted. While many independent unions have formed, the law on trade unions continues to impose undue restrictions on their operations.

Military courts have jailed thousands of ordinary Egyptians since the "25 January Revolution". The trials violate some of the basic guarantees of a fair trial, including the right to an effective appeal. While there are reports that many who have been tried in military trials have been tried again and released, thousands remain in prison.

In line with international law, Amnesty International opposes the trial of civilians by military courts. Such trials violate the right to a fair and public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law, as guaranteed in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party.

Name: Mahmoud Farouk Aljundi, Ahmed Mohamed Talaat, Mohamed Issam Syam, Abu Al Yazid Abdul Atti and Hassan Ahmed Al Armouti
Gender m

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