

URGENT ACTION

EGYPTIAN ACTIVISTS' SENTENCES REDUCED

A Cairo court of appeal handed down reduced prison sentences to human rights defender Yara Sallam, activist Sanaa Ahmed Seif and 20 others on 28 December.

A court of appeal has reduced the three-year prison sentences against the group, handed down in October, to two years' imprisonment with two years' probation, and cancelled the fine the lower court had imposed of 10,000 Egyptian Pounds (US\$1,400).

The court, sitting at the police academy at Cairo's Fifth Settlement district, gave no reason for its decision, a representative of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights told Amnesty International. A lower court had jailed the group on 26 October, after convicting them of breaching Egypt's repressive Protest Law and a string of public order offences during a protest in Cairo in June 2014.

Lawyers for the group had argued that evidence presented in court had not proved that any of them had taken part in violence. Yara Sallam's lawyers also argued that she had not taken part in the demonstration, but had been arrested in the same area afterwards.

The group will now appeal their sentences before Egypt's highest court of law, the Court of Cassation.

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

- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to release Yara Sallam immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- Calling on them to release, immediately and unconditionally, anyone detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly;
- Urging them to ensure the other defendants are released unless they are tried in full conformity with international fair trial standards on recognizably criminal charges that do not criminalize the exercise of their right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 FEBRUARY 2015 TO:

Public Prosecutor

Hesham Mohamed Zaki Barakat
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House, 1 "26 July" Road
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716
+202 2 575 7165
(switched off after office hours, GMT+2)

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 391 1441
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign
Affairs for Human Rights
Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
Multilateral Affairs and International
Security Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of 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 fourth update of UA 164/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/057/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The security forces had arrested the group on 21 June 2014 in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis, after breaking up a demonstration in the area. They were charged with a string of offences, including “taking part in an unauthorized demonstration that endangered public order and security”; “vandalizing property”; “making a show of force in order to terrify and threaten the lives of passers-by”; and “participating in a gathering of over five people in order to disturb the public order and commit crimes”.

Under Egypt's Law Regulating the Right to Public Gatherings, Processions and Peaceful Protests (Law 107 of 2013), protest organizers must submit their plans to the authorities, who have wide powers to cancel or reroute proposed demonstrations.

According to testimonies gathered by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, as a group of protesters marched on the Ittihadiya presidential palace in the early evening of 21 June, groups of men threw broken glass at them and later attacked them. When protesters reached Ismailiya Square in Cairo, the security forces fired tear gas, scattering them into side streets. The security forces arrested around 30 people at the scene, some of whom had been brought to them by groups of people who support the authorities, known in Egypt as “honourable citizens”.

The security forces then questioned the suspects without lawyers present, defence lawyers told Amnesty International. The Public Prosecution remanded 23 people in custody for investigation on 23 June, and ordered the release of one other person, Amr Ahmed Mohamed Mahmoud. The Public Prosecution referred him and 22 of the detainees to trial on 25 June. Another detainee arrested on 21 June, Islam Tawfik Mohamed Hassan, is a 16-year-old child, facing trial before a juvenile court in another case. Amr Ahmed Mohamed Mahmoud was tried in his absence.

Yara Sallam is a human rights defender working at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. She is also known for her work on women's rights. She and the six other women are detained in al-Qanater Prison. The men are detained in Tora Prison.

Names: Sanaa Ahmed Seif (f), Mohamed Ahmed Youssef Saad, Bassam Mohamed Aly El Saed, Ahmed Samir Mahmoud Mohamed, Islam Tawfik Mohamed Hassan, Yasser Samir Fadel Sayed, Ibrahim Ahmed ElSaed AbdelRahaman, Salwa Aboud Aly Mehrez (f), Karim Moustafa Yassin, Yara Sallam (f), Islam Mohamed AbdelHamid Mohamed, Nahed Sherif Abdelhamid ElSaed (f), Fekrya Mohamed Mohamed (f), Mohamed Anwar Massoud, Hanan Moustafa Ahmed Soliman (f), Moataz Mahmoud Mansour Ragheb, Mohamed ElSaed AlSayed, Ahmed Mohamed Abdelhamid Mohamed, Mahmoud Hesham Hassanien AbdelAziz, Mo'men Mohamed Radwan, Mohamed ElSayed Mohamed, Moustafa Mohamed Ibrahim, Samar Ibrahim Mahmoud Ibrahim (f)

Further information on UA: 164/14 Index: MDE 12/001/2015 Issue Date: 8 January 2015