

URGENT ACTION

YARA SALLAM, 21 OTHERS, JAILED FOR THREE YEARS
Human rights defender Yara Sallam, activist Sanaa Ahmed Seif and 20 others were jailed for three years on 26 October by a criminal court, which convicted them of breaching Egypt's repressive Protest Law and a string of other charges.

The verdict was handed down by the Heliopolis Court of Misdemeanours, convened in the Tora Police Institute, an annex of Tora Prison. Families and members of the public were not allowed to attend. The group will now appeal the conviction before a higher court, their legal representatives told Amnesty International.

The security forces had arrested the group on 21 June in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis, after breaking up a demonstration in the area.

Lawyers for the group told Amnesty International that evidence presented in court – including audiovisual material – had not proved any of the group had taken part in violence. Yara Sallam's lawyers had argued that the human rights defender had not taken part in the protest, but was arrested in a security sweep that followed.

Lawyers also told Amnesty International that during the last trial hearings on 11 and 26 October, the defendants could not hear the trial or communicate with their legal team because a tinted glass screen had been installed, which cut them off from the rest of the courtroom.

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;
- Urging them to grant the group the right to a public hearing, where they can observe their trial without barriers and can hear their trial and participate in their defence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 DECEMBER 2014 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 third update of UA 164/14. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/051/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The court also fined each of the defendants 10,000 Egyptian Pounds (US\$1,400) and held them liable for the cost of repairing buildings damaged during the events of 21 June. Security forces will monitor the group for three years after their release.

The group had been charged with “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, some groups of men threw broken glass at them and later attacked them, armed with knives and swords. When protesters reached Ismailiya Square in Cairo, the security forces fired tear gas at them, scattering them into side streets. The security forces arrested around 30 people at the scene, some of whom were captured by groups of people who support the authorities, known in Egypt as “honourable citizens”.

The security forces questioned the suspects without lawyers present, defence lawyers told Amnesty International. On 23 June, the Public Prosecution remanded 23 people in custody pending investigation 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 had been walking through the area where the protest took place with her cousin and was buying a bottle of water from a kiosk when a group of men in civilian clothes approached them. The group called the security forces, who arrested both women. They later released Yara Sallam’s cousin, but kept Yara Sallam detained.

Yara Sallam and the six other women are detained in al-Qanater Prison. The men are detained in Tora Prison. Trying the defendants inside the Tora Prison Complex and not allowing the public to attend undermines the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair and public hearing and is contrary to international and Egyptian law. The judge refused requests by the legal team to order the provisional release of the defendants, despite the fact that there was no valid reason for detaining them.

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)

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 164/14 Index: MDE 12/057/2014 Issue Date: 27 October 2014