

URGENT ACTION

COURT SENTENCES 183 TO DEATH, JAILS FIVE

An Egyptian court sentenced 183 people to death on 21 June, after a grossly unfair trial. Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie was among those condemned to death, as was a blind man who could not have taken part in any political violence.

The Minya Criminal Court convicted the defendants of taking part in a deadly attack on a police station in the village of al-Adwa last August. The sentences on 21 June followed a grossly unfair hearing on 25 March, in which the court panel questioned more than 50 witnesses and 74 defendants, without their lawyers present, in a matter of hours.

Defendants and their families were barred from the court hearing on 21 June, which was also marked by a heavy security presence, said an Amnesty International trial observer. The court sentenced one of the 183 people condemned to death to a 15-year prison term in addition and jailed four others. It acquitted the remaining 496 standing trial in the case.

Under Egyptian law, before handing down death sentences criminal courts must first seek the advice of the country's highest religious official, the Grand Mufti. The court had referred the cases of all 683 individuals who had been on trial to the Mufti on 28 April. When handing down the sentences on 21 June, the court did not state why it had sentenced some to death and not others.

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

- Urging the Egyptian authorities to quash the 183 death sentences and five prison sentences formally handed down on 21 June and order a fair retrial, without recourse to the death penalty, for all those who have been convicted;
- Calling on them to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions, as a first step towards abolition.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 AUGUST 2014 TO:

Minister of Justice

Mahfouz Saber
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 7958103
Email: mojeb@idsc.gov.eg

Salutation: Your Excellency

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:

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)

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 first update of UA 100/14. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/024/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Prosecution charged all 683 defendants with “murder”, “attempted murder”, “burning al-Adwa Police Station”, “belonging to a banned group” and “taking part in a gathering of more than five people with the intention of committing the aforementioned crimes”.

Supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi took to the streets across Egypt on 14 August 2013, after the security forces violently dispersed pro-Morsi sit-ins in the Rabaa al-Adawiya district of Nasr City and at al-Nahda Square in Giza. In the next few days, hundreds died at the hands of the security forces, who used excessive force to break up the protests across the country. In the wake of the crackdown, some of Mohamed Morsi’s supporters attacked government buildings, police stations and the security forces. In some attacks police officers were abducted, beaten and even killed.

That day, the security forces clashed with protesters who had gathered in the village of al-Adwa in the governorate of Minya. Some protesters then marched to the police station, where further violence led to the deaths of a police officer and the son of an assistant police officer. A defence lawyer told Amnesty International that the security forces then arrested everyone at the scene of the clashes.

On 28 April, the Minya Criminal Court agreed to sentence all 683 defendants to death, in what was the second unfair mass trial by the court in five weeks. The same day, the court also sentenced 37 people to death and 491 others to life in prison in a separate trial. The court had initially recommended death sentences for all 528 defendants in that case in March (see UA 75/14, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE12/023/2014/en>).

It was unclear what evidence the Prosecution had produced connecting the detained general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood to inciting the violence in al-Adwa. Mohamed Badie was arrested in Nasr City on 20 August 2013, according to Egypt’s Interior Ministry. He is facing trial in a number of cases related to political violence. The Muslim Brotherhood, to which Mohamed Morsi belonged before he took office and has remained closely linked, has been banned, and the government has declared it to be a “terrorist organization”.

The Giza Criminal Court recommended death sentences for 14 top Muslim Brotherhood leaders on 19 June. Those convicted include Mohamed Badie, and Muslim Brotherhood leaders Safwat Hegazi and Mohamed El-Beltagi, as well as 11 others, including Assem Abdel-Maged, a leader of the Gamaa Islamiya, Essam El-Erian, deputy head of Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party and Bassem Ouda, Mohamed Morsi’s supply minister. The casefile has been sent to the Grand Mufti and the verdict is expected on 3 August.

The Grand Mufti must review all death sentences imposed by criminal courts, but his opinion is only advisory. Those condemned may challenge their death sentences before the Court of Cassation, Egypt’s supreme court. Under Egyptian law, those sentenced in their absence (*in absentia*) also have the right to a retrial.

Six men and one woman have been hanged since 16 June: they had been convicted of murder and violent robbery. These were the first executions recorded by Amnesty International in Egypt since October 2011.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.

Name: 683 people

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 100/14 Index: MDE 12/038/2014 Issue Date: 24 June 2014