

URGENT ACTION

SHAWKAN STILL DETAINED AFTER FOUR YEARS

On 12 August, the Cairo criminal court adjourned Mahmoud Abu Zeid's court hearing 19 August, for the 35th time. Today is the four-year anniversary of Mahmoud Abu Zeid arrest. The Egyptian photojournalist, also known as "Shawkan," has been in prison for four years. He is a prisoner of conscience.

On 12 August, the Cairo criminal court adjourned **Mahmoud Abu Zeid's** court session for the 35th time to 19 August. The Egyptian police arrested the photojournalist on 14 August 2013, while he was covering the Rabaa crackdown. The Egyptian authorities have been detaining Mahmoud Abu Zeid for four years. He is held in Cairo's Tora Prison Complex since December 2013.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid's family told Amnesty International that he was diagnosed with Hepatitis C before his arrest on 14 August 2013 and that his health is deteriorating in prison. However, on 20 May, the Public prosecutor presented the Forensic Medical Authority report on Shawkan's health condition to the Cairo criminal court. The report claimed that Mahmoud Abu Zeid is not suffering from any disease, and that he is in a "very good" health. In the same session, the judge ordered an investigation into allegations made by several detainees, including Mahmoud Abu Zeid, that the prison administration ill-treated them through withholding medicine and toiletries in addition to physical assault.

The 29-year-old photojournalist is a defendant in a mass trial along with 738 others, including senior leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Public prosecutor charged him with nine offences, including murder, which puts him at risk of death penalty if convicted. So far, the prosecution has not provided sufficient evidence to establish a connection that Mahmoud Abu Zeid is responsible for the offences with which he is charged. Amnesty International considers Mahmoud Abu Zied a prisoner of conscience.

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

- Urging the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against Mahmoud Abu Zeid, and to release him immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to protect Mahmoud Abu Zeid from torture and other ill-treatment for so long as he remains in detention;
- Calling on them to order an independent and impartial investigation into allegations that he has been tortured and otherwise ill-treated while in custody, and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

President
Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2391 1441
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial
Salutation: Your Excellency

Interior Minister
Magdy Abdel Ghaffar
Ministry of Interior
Fifth Settlement, New Cairo
Egypt
Fax: +202 2794 5529
Email: center@moi.gov.eg
Twitter: @moiegy
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights
Laila Bahaa El Din
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2574 9713
Email: Contact.Us@mfa.gov.eg
Twitter: @MfaEgypt

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR NASSER AHMED KAMEL ALI, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street W1K 1DW, 020 7499 3304/2401, Fax 020 7491 1542, eg.emb_london@mfa.gov.eg and etembuk@hotmail.com Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the twelfth update of UA twelfth. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/5420/2017/en/>



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahmoud Abu Zeid (“Shawkan”) was part of Amnesty International’s Write for Rights campaign in December 2016, during which people all over the world wrote letters of solidarity and appeals to the government. At least 445,590 from all over the world called for Shawkan’s release as part of the campaign.

Police forces arrested the freelance photojournalist on 14 August 2013 while on assignment for London-based photo agency Demotix. They also arrested two foreign journalists along with him, but they released the two journalists on the same day. Demotix told the Public Prosecutor’s Office that Mahmoud Abu Zeid was on assignment for them, but Egyptian authorities continued to detain him.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid told Amnesty International that police and army officers beat him during his first day under arrest and on 17 August 2013, when he was transferred from an overcrowded cell at a police station in Cairo to the capital’s Abu Zaabal Prison. According to his letter, published by Amnesty International on 5 April, officers punched and kicked him, and beat him with batons. They also kept him in a parked truck for eight hours, although the temperature was above 30 degrees centigrade, without food, water or fresh air, when he got to Abu Zaabal Prison. In the letter, he described his indefinite detention as “psychologically unbearable”. 2015. See Shawkan’s letter: 600 days in jail for taking pictures: A letter from an Egyptian prison, 5 April 2015 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/04/600-days-in-jail-for-taking-pictures/>). He was transferred to Cairo’s Tora Prison Complex in December 2013, where he is still held.

The proceedings against Shawkan have been unfair. Egyptian authorities have repeatedly denied access to his lawyers to key documents related to the case, including the list of charges against him before the trial began. This made it difficult for them to prepare his defence. Mass trials also make it difficult to ensure the right to a fair trial is guaranteed for each of the defendants. The Egyptian authorities have used mass trials for those connected with opposition groups, with many of those put on trial facing trumped-up charges without evidence establishing each defendant’s individual criminal responsibility.

The UN Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released an opinion on 21 October 2016 calling on the Egyptian authorities to “immediately release” Shawkan and “accord him an enforceable right to reparation”. It considers the arrest of Shawkan and the deprivation of his liberty to be arbitrary and in violation of rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Egypt is a state party to the ICCPR, Article 9 of which prohibits arbitrary detention. Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of expression - that is, the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Article 14 guarantees the right of everyone to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. The article further guarantees the rights of everyone facing criminal charges to be informed promptly of the nature and cause of the charges against them, the right to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of their defence, the right to be tried in their presence, and the right to examine, or have examined, the witnesses against them.

Further information on UA: 243/14 Index: MDE 12/6903/2017 Issue Date: 14 August 2017