UA 100/14 1 May 2014 **URGENT ACTION** MDE 12/024/2014

**COURT AGREES TO 683 DEATH SENTENCES**

EGYPT

**683 people (m)**

In a second mass trial in five weeks, an Egyptian court has agreed to sentence a further 683 people to death, again following a grossly unfair trial. Those condemned include Mohamed Badie, the detained General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The judges at the Minya Criminal Court agreed unanimously on 28 April 2014 to sentence all 683 defendants to death and referred the case to the Grand Mufti, who must be consulted by criminal courts before they can formally impose death sentences. All faced charges of involvement in deadly violence around the police station in the village of al-Adwa in the governorate of Minya on 14 August 2013. No defendants were present in court, though the security forces are holding 74 of them in detention, a defence lawyer has told Amnesty International.

Defence lawyers had boycotted the only previous court hearing in this case, on 25 March, after the same presiding judge referred 528 people to the Grand Mufti in a separate case after an unfair trial. Despite the absence of the lawyers, the judges continued with the trial of the 683, questioning more than 50 witnesses and 74 defendants in only one hearing that lasted just a few hours. The presiding judge fined the defence lawyers 50 Egyptian Pounds (US$7) on 28 April, and referred them to a disciplinary panel for refusing to attend the hearing. An Amnesty International delegate observed the court session that day. There were armed security officers with machine-guns inside the courtroom, with their faces covered by black masks.

Seventy four defendants are held in Al-Wadi Al-Gedid Prison, an eight-hour journey from al-Adwa village for their relatives. Families told Amnesty International that they had to leave in the night to make the journey in time to see their loved ones in prison.

The court will formally hand down the sentences on 21 June.

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

\* Urging the Egyptian authorities to quash all death sentences;

\* Calling on them to establish immediately an official moratorium on executions, as a first step towards abolition;

\* Calling on them to transfer the 74 men held in Al-Wadi Al-Gedid Prison to a closer prison.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JUNE 2014 TO: (Time difference = GMT + 2 hrs / BST + 1 hrs)**

Minister of Justice
Nayer Abdel-Moneim Othman
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
**Fax: 00202 2 7958103**
Email: mojeb@idsc.gov.eg
Salutation: *Your Excellency*

Interim President
Adly Mahmoud Mansour
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
**Fax: 00202 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: 00202 2 577 4716 ;
00202 2 575 7165**
(switched off after office hours, GMT+2)

**PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEAL TO**

His Excellency Mr Ashraf Elkholy, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, London, W1K 1DW

**Fax:** 020 7491 1542 **Tel:** 020 7499 3304 **Email:** egamboff.london@mfa.gov.eg ; egyemblondon@mfa.gov.eg

**BACKGROUND 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.”

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.

The Minya Criminal Court trying the 628 people referred another 528 people to the Grand Mufti on 24 March in a separate case, after trying them on charges of attacking a police station in the village of Mattay, killing the deputy head of the police station and attempting to kill two police officers. The ruling followed a grossly unfair trial. The same court then formally handed down death sentences against 37 people on 28 April and sentenced 491 others to life in prison (see UA 75/14, http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE12/023/2014/en ).

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 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. 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. 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.

It was unclear what evidence the Prosecution had produced connecting the detained general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood to the violence in al-Adwa. Mohamed Badie had been 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 associated with, has been banned, and the government has declared it to be a “terrorist organization”.

Egypt is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 14 of which 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 right 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. Article 6 of the ICCPR states that in countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime, and not contrary to the provisions of the ICCPR.

**PLEASE CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAMME AT AIUK BEFORE SENDING APPEALS AFTER 12 JUNE 2014**

Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA, 0207 033 1572, iar@amnesty.org.uk.