

URGENT ACTION

RIGHTS LAWYER, JOURNALIST AND ACTIVIST HELD

Human rights lawyer Mahienour El-Massry and two others have been detained pending the verdict of an Egyptian appeals court, due on 31 May. They deny the trumped-up charges of which they have been convicted.

Human rights lawyer **Mahienour El-Massry**, journalist **Youssef Shaaban** and political activist **Loay El-Kahwagy** attended the first hearing of their appeal on 11 May, after which the judge ordered them to be detained until the verdict, which is due on 31 May.

They had been sentenced in February 2015 to two years in prison for offences including “protesting without authorization”, “damaging police property”, “attacking security forces” and “threatening public security” after taking part in a protest outside al-Raml Police Station on 29 March 2013. The protest was in solidarity with lawyers protesting inside the police station, after they accused police officers of verbally and physically attacking them. Eight other people, tried in absentia, received similar prison sentences.

A close friend of the three defendants who was at the appeal hearing told Amnesty International that the police had thrown out everyone in the court except the defendants and lawyers, threatening them with Tasers and clubs. Their defence lawyer has told Amnesty International that he and the other lawyers were told of this decision not by the judge, but by the police. Mahienour El-Massry is being held in Al-Abadeya women’s prison in the city of Damanhour, while Youssef Shaaban and Loay El-Kahwagy are detained at Borg El-Arab Prison in the city of Alexandria.

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

- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to release Mahienour El-Massry immediately and unconditionally, and to ensure her conviction is quashed, as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urging them to release Youssef Shaaban and Loay El-Kahwagy, as they appear to have been detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly or else charge them with a recognizably criminal offence under international law in proceedings that meet international standards of fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 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
(only in 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
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Moh_moussa@op.gov.eg
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign
Affairs for Human Rights
Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Three lawyers were detained on 29 March 2013 by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who took them to the al-Raml police station, and accused them of being their political opponents who might try to set fire to their offices, according to testimony by Mahienour El-Massry and a fellow lawyer Nasser Khattab, who went to the police station to be present when the three lawyers were being questioned. This was during the government of former president Mohamed Morsi, who had been a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood before he took office.

Nasser Khattab said in his testimony that police officers prevented other lawyers from attending the questioning and assaulted them verbally and physically. The lawyers who were attacked decided to take part in a protest sit-in at the police station until they received an official apology from the Ministry of Interior to the Lawyers' Syndicate, of which the lawyers were members, or the Public Prosecution opened an official investigation into the incident. Neither occurred, so the protest continued late into the night with solidarity protesters standing outside the police station as well.

Police officers from across Alexandria, as well as about 500 army officers and two police vehicles, arrived outside the al-Raml police station at about 1.30am, according to a video-recorded testimony by Youssef Shaaban. His wife, Ranwa Mohamed Youssef Ali, said in a television interview that police officers had sexually assaulted her as they were trying to arrest her husband. The security officers arrested a number of people at the scene, including Mahienour El-Massry, Youssef Shaaban and Loay El-Kahwagy, but released them later that day.

The case was set aside until 20 March 2014 when it was reopened and 11 people, including Mahienour El-Massry, Youssef Shaaban and Loay El-Kahwagy were charged with "congregating", "damaging police property", "attacking security officers", "disturbing public security" and "attempting to overthrow the regime". All the defendants were sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$653) on 9 February 2015. Mahienour El-Massry, Youssef Shaaban and Loay El-Kahwagy appealed. The others were tried in their absence, and are in hiding, according to a defence lawyer working on the case.

Mahienour El-Massry and Loay El-Kahwagy have been convicted in another, separate case of "protesting without authorization" outside the Alexandria Criminal Court on 2 December 2013 while it was retrying two police officers accused of killing 18-year-old Khaled Said, who had died in June 2010 after being publicly beaten by police officers. Mahienour El-Massry was sentenced in her absence to two years in prison in January 2014. She challenged the verdict, and was present when the court upheld the two-year sentence in May 2014. She was held in the Abadeya Damanhour women's prison for four months. The court of appeal reduced her sentence in June 2014 to six months' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 Egyptian pounds (UD\$6,534). She was released in September 2014 after her lawyers challenged the verdict before Egypt's highest court of law, the court of Cassation. The court is yet to look into the case. Loay El-Kahwagy is serving out the sentence at Borg El-Arab prison.

Mahienour El-Massry is a prominent human rights lawyer in Alexandria, where she plays a leading role in defending workers' and refugees' rights. During her detention in 2014 she was awarded the prestigious Ludovic Trarieux Human Rights Prize.

Names: Mahienour El-Massry (f), Youssef Shaaban (m), Loay El-Kahwagy (m)

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