

URGENT ACTION

WITNESSES DUE IN COURT, DESPITE ACQUITTAL

Prominent women's human rights defender Azza Soliman is due in court on 4 July, along with 16 others who witnessed the police killing of a left-wing activist. All risk up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds.

Women's human rights defender 'Azza Soliman, and 16 other eyewitnesses to a killing by police during a peaceful march are due in court on 4 July. They are at risk of up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$6,530). The judge ordered them to be present during a hearing on 13 June.

The 17 defendants had been acquitted on 23 May, by a Cairo court, of "protesting illegally" and "disturbing public order" under Egypt's repressive Protest Law. Three days later, Egypt's Public Prosecution appealed. The 13 June session was the first in the appeal process. It took place in the Zainhom Appeal Court in the presence of two trial observers from the European Union delegation in Cairo.

According to the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, which 'Azza Soliman founded, the judge noted that the defendants were not present in court, which they should have been, under Egypt's Litigation Law. The defence lawyers said their clients had the right to be represented by lawyers. The defence lawyers have advised their clients that not all of them need to be present on 4 July.

Policeman Yassin Hatem Salahedeen was sentenced to 15 years in prison on 11 June for the killing of left-wing activist and poet Shaimaa al-Sabbagh.

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

- Calling on the Assistant Public Prosecutor to withdraw the appeal as the 17 defendants had been charged for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and as retribution for testifying about abuses by the security forces;
- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against the 17 defendants (naming them).

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 AUGUST 2015 TO:

Assistant Public Prosecutor
Ali Omran
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House
1 "26 July" Road
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716
(only during 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. This is the third update of UA 80/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/1737/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Left-wing activist Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh, a poet, was shot on 24 January during a peaceful commemorative march in central Cairo forcibly dispersed by Egyptian security forces. Video footage and photographs of her killing, taken by journalists and activists, sparked widespread outrage in Egypt and beyond.

Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh had been taking part in a peaceful commemorative march to Tahrir Square by leftist political party the Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPAP). The small group of around 30 marchers had been carrying a banner with the party's name, as well as flowers to pay tribute to the hundreds who died during the 2011 uprising. They marched on the sidewalk to avoid blocking traffic. Under Egypt's draconian Protest Law, participating in a gathering or demonstration of 10 or more people without prior authorization by the Interior Ministry is a crime. However, those who took part in the march have maintained that they were not demonstrating, but marching to commemorate those who had died.

An eyewitness has told Amnesty International that the security forces guarding the entrance to Tahrir Square had stopped the march in nearby Talaat Harb Street before opening fire on the protesters with shotguns and tear gas.

According to the head of Egypt's Forensic Authority, Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh died from injuries caused by shotgun pellets fired into her back and the back of her head from eight metres away. The authorities initially denied that the security forces were responsible for her death. The Public Prosecution then charged a member of the security forces with "beating, injury or giving harmful substances that led to death" of Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh. The officer is now serving a 15-year prison sentence.

Azza Soliman, founder of the NGO Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, said in her testimony that she had not been part of the march, but had been sitting in a café with her family and friends. She heard the marchers chanting and went outside to see. She saw the security forces breaking up the march with tear gas and shotguns. She also saw a body in the street, which she learned was that of Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh. Two others now on trial were not involved in the march. One is a doctor, who offered first aid to Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh after she was shot; the second is a bystander who carried Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh to a nearby café for safety. Both were arrested at the scene. The remaining 14 defendants were part of the peaceful commemorative march. Some were arrested at the scene, and others went to testify after being summoned by the Public Prosecutor. One man was accused of killing Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh after offering his eyewitness testimony. When no evidence was found against him, he was instead charged with protesting illegally and disturbing public order.

Names: Azza Soliman, Nagwa Abbas, Maher Shaker, Mostafa Abdelaal, Sayed Abu El Ela, Elhami El Merghany, Adel El Meleegy, Mohamed Ahmed Mahmoud, Zohdy El Shamy, Ahmed Fathy Nasr, Talaat Fahmy, Taha Tantawi, Abdel Hameed Mostafa Nada, Mohamed Saleh Fathy, Hossam Nasr, Mohamed Saleh, Khaled Mostafa.

Gender m/f: All male except Azza Soliman and Nagwa Abbas

Further information on UA: 80/15 Index: MDE 12/1985/2015 Issue Date: 2 July 2015