



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

**Egypt - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 20 September 2016**

**Information on an anti-government demo on 25 April 2016 including violence/injuries/deaths/detentions;**

*Amnesty International* states in a report issued in April 2016 that:

“Security forces arbitrarily arrested hundreds of people in response to planned protests in Egypt yesterday, said Amnesty International, after large numbers of security forces deployed to prevent demonstrators from gathering in Cairo and elsewhere” (Amnesty International (26 April 2016) *Egypt: Mass arrests in 'ruthlessly efficient' bid to block peaceful protest*).

A report issued in April 2016 by *Human Rights Watch* notes:

“Egyptian security forces arrested at least 382 people in the days leading up to and during the dispersal of mostly peaceful protests on April 25, 2016. The protests followed a rare mass demonstration against President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo on April 15” (Human Rights Watch (27 April 2016) *Egypt: Fearing Protests, Police Arrest Hundreds*).

In April 2016 *Alkarama* states:

“The transfer of two Red Sea islands, Tiran and Sanafir, to Saudi Arabia has been the subject of considerable criticism in Egypt. On 15 April 2015, few days after the announcement of this deal between the two countries, Egyptians peacefully gathered to protest against it. Although people initially took to the streets to express their discontent over the planned handover, many slogans were directed against the increasingly authoritarian drift of the regime and the state security apparatus. Similar peaceful protests were held on 25 April 2016 across the country. These demonstrations were met with excessive and unnecessary force used by security forces and the police. It was indeed reported that despite the peacefulness of the protests, the police resorted to teargas and rubber bullets against demonstrators. It should be recalled that according to the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the use of force against a person can only be resorted to "in self-defence or in the defence of others" “ (Alkarama (28 April 2016) *Egypt: hundreds of peaceful demonstrators arrested and detained in renewed wave of repression*).

A report issued in May 2016 the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* notes that:

“On 15 and 25 April, protest took place across Egypt and security forces responded with tear gas and use of force to disperse the protestors. Over 380 protestors, journalists and human rights defenders were arrested during the demonstrations. Security forces also stopped pedestrians in Cairo and inspected their social media accounts for 'anti-Government publications' and 'inciting pictures'” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (9 May 2016) *Egypt: Worsening crackdown on protest, a further setback to human rights – UN experts*).

*BBC News* in May 2016 points out that:

“Egypt has sentenced 51 people to two years each in prison for protesting against a decision last month to cede two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia” (*BBC News* (14 May 2016) *Egypt jails 51 for protesting against Saudi islands deal*).

A report released in May 2016 by *Human Rights Watch* states:

“Egyptian courts have sentenced more than 150 people to prison terms since the beginning of May 2016 for participating in peaceful protests or spreading false information. On May 24, an appeals court replaced the prison sentences for 47 who had started hunger strikes, with a fine of 100,000 L.E (\$11,270 USD) each which they have to pay before being released” (*Human Rights Watch* (25 May 2016) *Egypt: Scores of Protesters Jailed Unjustly*).

This report also states that:

“Police apprehended all of the defendants in the days leading up to and during the dispersal of mostly peaceful protests on April 15 and 25 over the government decision to cede two islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia. The 47 defendants said, on May 18, after sentencing that they would begin hunger strikes. Three had been hospitalized in serious condition, activists said, but officials have released no information about them” (*ibid*).

A report released in June 2016 by the *World Organisation Against Torture* notes that:

“According to the Front of Defence for Egyptian Protestors, police arrested 1,277 people between 15 and 27 April in relation to protests regarding the Egyptian government’s transfer of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. More than 600 faced trial for breaches of the Protest Law, and on 14 May, 152 were given prison sentences of between two and five years. Forty seven of those sentences were later reduced to fines of 100,000 pounds (US\$11,270) each, and the rest remain on appeal” (*World Organisation Against Torture* (22 June 2016) *Egypt: Joint Statement: Civil society faces existential threat*).

In July 2016 the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* notes that:

“On 15 and 25 April, protests took place in Cairo and around the country in relation to the demarcation of the two islands of Tiran and Sanafir as Saudi Arabian territory. According to local organisations, 1,312 individuals were arrested in relation to the protests, although there are no official figures to confirm this. 152 individuals were sentenced to between 2 and 5 years in prison (72 in absentia) in relation to their participation in the protests, but 52 of these were acquitted, and the remainder in detention had their prison sentences reduced to a fine on appeal. Other detainees have been sentenced in separate cases in relation to calls for or participation in protests. These include activist Sanaa Seif who is serving a 6-month sentence for “insulting the judiciary” during her questioning on charges of handing out leaflets calling for protests. A number of HRDs were detained around the time of the protests, including Board Chair of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) Ahmad Abdallah, ECRF Minority Rights Programme Director Mina Thabet, and human rights lawyer Malek Adly. Mina Thabet was released on bail on 20 June, but Ahmad Abdallah and Malek Adly remain in detention. Minister for North Africa, Tobias Ellwood, and senior officials have raised protest-related detentions, including

the case of Ahmad Abdallah, with the Egyptian Ambassador in London and senior officials at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (21 July 2016) *Egypt - Human Rights Priority Country update report: January to June 2016*).

In August 2016 the *World Organisation Against Torture* notes:

"The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the Court's decision to release Mr. Malek Adly, a human rights lawyer working for the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) and co-funder of the Front of Defence for Egyptian Protesters (FDEP) who has been detained without formal charges and in solitary confinement in Mazraah Prison in Torah since May 5, 2016" (World Organisation Against Torture (26 August 2016) *Egypt: Court orders the release of Mr. Malek Adly, but prosecution appeals*).

This document also states that:

"On May 5, 2016, Mr. Malek Adly was arrested by the Egyptian Security Forces in Maadi, Cairo based on an arrest warrant issued on April 23, 2016. The arrest warrant related to a call to protest on April 25, 2016, condemning the recent government decision to transfer the sovereignty of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia (Tiran and Sanafir) and against President Al Sissi's policies, human rights abuses and crimes committed by the Egyptian security forces" (ibid).

A report published in September 2016 by *Amnesty International* states:

"The detention of Ahmed Abdullah has been renewed for a further 45 days, after a Cairo criminal court accepted an appeal against his release on bail. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his human rights work. On 5 September, a Cairo criminal court ruled that human rights defender Ahmed Abdullah is to remain in pre-trial detention, accepting an appeal by the Public Prosecution against a previous court order for his release. A Cairo misdemeanour appeal court had ordered the release of Ahmed Abdullah and four co-defendants on a bail payment of 10,000 Egyptian pounds (approximately US\$ 1,130) on 3 September. Their detention has been renewed for a further 45 days. Courts have continuously renewed Ahmed Abdullah's pre-trial detention since his arrest on 25 April. He told his lawyers that he was ill-treated upon arrest by the security forces, when an arresting officer struck him repeatedly on the head using the butt of his gun. The authorities have not opened an investigation into these allegations" (Amnesty International (8 September 2016) *Further Information on Urgent Action: 9/16 [MDE 12/4782/2016]*).

The *Middle East and North Africa Financial Network* in September 2016 notes:

"Ahmed Abdullah, director the Egyptian Commission for Human Rights (ECRF), walked free on Saturday, the non-governmental organisation reported. His release has not been an easy procedure after months spent in detention. Last week, Abdullah and his co-defendants were granted a release by court. However, the prosecution challenged the verdict and they remained in detention. Abdullah received the release order on EGP 10,000 bail, along with another four defendants in the same case. They were all detained on accusations of inciting people to violence, attempting to overthrow the government, establishing an outlawed group, and hindering the work of state institutions. Abdullah was arrested from his home at dawn on 25 April amid sweeping security raids against political and human rights activists, which was part of an attempt to foil any protests against the Red Sea islands deal"

(Middle East and North Africa Financial Network (11 September 2016) *Egypt- Regeni advocate Ahmed Abdullah walks free*).

In September 2016 the *Egypt Independent* points out that:

“Qasr al-Nil Misdemeanor Court has upheld the acquittal of 51 suspects accused of taking part in illegal protests on April 25 this year, known as "Friday of the Land". On Sunday, the court rejected a challenge submitted by the prosecution against a previous verdict that cleared the suspects in June. The defendants, who were arrested in connection with the protests, were previously sentenced by a lower court to two years in prison”(Egypt Independent (18 September 2016) *Court upholds acquittal of 51 suspects involved in 'Friday of the Land' protests*).

### **Treatment of those who are anti-government**

A report issued in January 2016 by *Freedom House* commenting on events of the preceding year points out that:

“The government systematically persecutes opposition parties and political movements, disrupting their operations and constraining their ability to organize” (Freedom House (27 January 2016) *Freedom in the World 2016: Egypt*).

In April 2016 the *United States Department of State* notes:

“Human rights groups and international observers maintained the government detained or imprisoned as many as several thousand persons solely or chiefly because of their political beliefs or opposition to the government” (United States Department of State (13 April 2016) *2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt*).

A document issued in April 2016 by *Human Rights Watch* notes that:

“Military courts have tried at least 7,420 Egyptian civilians since October 2014, when President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi decreed a major new law that expanded military court jurisdiction. A list of civilians tried in military courts, provided by the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms, an independent legal and human rights group, documents for the first time the extent to which al-Sisi's administration has used the military justice system to expedite its harsh crackdown on opponents” (Human Rights Watch (13 April 2016) *Egypt: 7,400 Civilians Tried In Military Courts*).

In June 2016 the *Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies* notes:

“Two years after President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi took his oath of office, the country has and continues to witness a clear deterioration in the status of civil rights and liberties. It is not only the rights and liberties of individuals that have been eroded; all manner of active civic institution, from professional syndicates and independent unions to political parties, media institutions, and civil society organizations, have been harassed and abused” (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (15 June 2016) *10 Rights groups launch Voices Behind Bars campaign to defend victims imprisoned for exercising freedom of expression*).

A report released in June 2016 by the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* notes that:

“The Special Rapporteur expresses grave concern about the pattern of increasing violence and restrictions on civil society and human rights organisations in Egypt...” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (16 June 2016) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association: Observations on communications transmitted to Governments and replies received [Egypt excerpt]*).

In July 2016 *Amnesty International* states in a report that:

“The past 18 months have also seen the emergence of a new pattern of human rights violations against political activists and protesters, including students and children, hundreds of whom have been arbitrarily arrested and detained and subjected to enforced disappearance by state agents” (Amnesty International (13 July 2016) *Egypt: 'Officially, you do not exist' – Disappeared and tortured in the name of counter-terrorism*).

This report also states:

“Some rights groups estimate that as many as 60,000 people have been detained for political reasons since July 2013” (ibid).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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