

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTER SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IN JAIL

On 26 June 2024, Egypt's Emergency State Security Court (ESSC) sentenced anti-torture protester Mahmoud Hussein, also known as the "T-shirt detainee" to three years in prison for wearing an anti-torture T-shirt. He was arrested following the court verdict and taken into custody to serve the remainder of his sentence after he had already spent two years and 10 months in pretrial detention. He is currently held in the El Marg police station, in Cairo, where detainees are banned from visits by families and lawyers. The Egyptian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Mahmoud Hussein as his detention is solely related to the exercise of his human rights.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about Mahmoud Hussein arbitrary detention solely for wearing an anti-torture T-shirt. On 26 June 2014, he was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison by an Emergency State Security Court (ESSC). ESSC's proceedings are inherently unfair, including because their verdicts are not subject to appeal, only Your Excellency's ratification.

Mahmoud Hussein was first arrested on 25 January 2014, in the aftermath of peaceful protests marking the third anniversary of the 25 January 2011 Revolution for wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "A Nation without Torture" and a scarf with the "25 January Revolution" logo. He then spent two years in arbitrary pretrial detention before being released on bail in 2016, following mobilization by activists and supporters. In 2018, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in his absence. He was re-arrested on 30 August 2023 and ordered into pretrial detention, pending his retrial. On 23 April 2024, the Cairo Criminal Court ordered his release on bail, but authorities continued to detain him until 26 May 2024 before finally releasing him and allowing him to reunite with his loved ones. He was rearrested on 26 June 2024 following the court verdict. He is held at El Marg police station, where detainees are banned from family visits.

Mahmoud Hussein's physical and mental health have severely deteriorated during his time in custody. Amnesty International documented how following his arrest in 2014, he was subjected to torture and other-ill treatment including beatings and electric shocks. He has suffered from chronic health conditions requiring two hip replacement surgeries. In November 2023, he underwent an anal fistula surgery at Badr prison hospital. His family remains extremely concerned about his well-being as his health condition requires regular monitoring by specialized medical professionals.

I urge you to quash Mahmoud Hussein's unjust conviction and sentence and immediately release him from arbitrary detention. Pending his release, he must be granted access to his family, lawyers and adequate healthcare and protected from torture and other ill-treatment, he must be held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners. Reports that he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment upon his first arrest in 2014 must be effectively, independently and impartially investigated.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces first arrested then 18-year-old Mahmoud Hussein on [25 January](#) 2014, in the aftermath of protests marking the 3rd anniversary of the “25 January Revolution”. Security forces stopped him at a checkpoint in the neighbourhood of El-Marg, northern Cairo, when he was returning home on a bus from protests, and arbitrarily arrested him simply because he was wearing a T-shirt with the slogan “A Nation without Torture” and a scarf with the emblem of the January 25 Revolution. Amnesty International [documented](#) how, following his arrest in 2014, National Security Agency (NSA) officials subjected him to [torture](#) and other ill-treatment, including beatings and the use of electric shocks to his hands, back and testicles. As a result of the torture, he was forced to “confess” to belonging to a banned group, possessing Molotov cocktails and hand grenades, and participating in unauthorized protests, with his forced “confession” recorded on video. The day after he “confessed” on camera, Mahmoud Hussein was taken for questioning by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP). He denied all the accusations and said he had been tortured to “confess”, but the prosecutor did not refer him for forensic examination or order any investigation into his torture allegations. Mahmoud Hussein stayed in El-Marg police station for six days and was later transferred to Abu Zaabal Prison where he was beaten upon arrival. In May 2014, he was transferred to Cairo’s Tora Appeal Prison, where he was also subjected to beatings on at least two occasions. He was eventually transferred Cairo’s Tora Investigations Prison. He remained in pretrial detention under case number 715 of 2014 in El-Marg and was referred for trial on 31 January 2016. On 24 March 2016, he was released on bail of 1,000 Egyptian pounds. The torture and other ill-treatment to which he was subjected left him with chronic health concerns. After being released from prison, Mahmoud Hussein developed a dependency on a crutch for walking and had two hip replacement surgeries.

Mahmoud Hussein is currently held at El Marg police station, Cairo, in an overcrowded room with no beds or access to healthcare. In that police station, officials ban visits to all detainees.

Mahmoud Hussein’s renewed arrest came amid a wave of fresh arrests of critics and relatives of dissidents based abroad, including the fathers of Egyptian journalist Ahmed Gamal Ziada, based in Belgium, and German-Egyptian activist Fagr al-Adly, based in Germany; both arrested in August 2023. Mahmoud Hussein is among the thousands of individuals arbitrarily detained in Egypt solely for exercising their human rights or following proceedings violating fair trial rights or without legal basis. Those held include human rights defenders, political activists, members of opposition parties, trade unionists, workers, peaceful protesters, journalists, lawyers, social media influencers, members of religious minorities, and medical professionals. During 2023, 834 prisoners held for political reasons were released, but authorities arrested triple this number. The Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) interrogated at least 2,504 suspected critics or opponents on accusations of involvement in terrorism-related offences, cybercrimes, protests and spreading “false news”. SSSP prosecutors and judges routinely renew pretrial detention orders for thousands of detainees without allowing them to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention. Amnesty International has also documented how SSSP prosecutors routinely open investigations into new cases on similar bogus charges against individuals in detention in relation to separate cases. The practice, commonly referred to as “rotation”, allows for the indefinite detention of individuals who served their sentences, received release orders by courts or exceeded two years in pretrial detention, the maximum period permissible under Egyptian law.

Following his release from detention in 2016, Mahmoud Hussein tried to rebuild his life, opening a small business to produce T-Shirts, and had recently proposed to his girlfriend. He had also undergone medical treatment and was getting counselling.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 November 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mahmoud Hussein (He/Him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7841/2024/en/>

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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