

URGENT ACTION

EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ARRESTED

Prominent human rights defender, Dr Ahmed Abdullah, was arrested at his home and beaten on 25 April. A prosecutor in Cairo ordered his pre-trial detention for 15 days on 27 April on “terrorism” charges. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Egyptian prisoner of conscience and human rights defender, **Dr Ahmed Abdullah**, was arrested at his home by special forces in Fifth Settlement District, Cairo, in the early hours of 25 April. His home was searched and his laptop and mobile phone confiscated, before he was taken to New Cairo Police Station No. 1. According to his representatives, an arresting officer struck him repeatedly on the head using the butt of his gun.

While at New Cairo Police Station No. 1, Dr Ahmed Abdullah, who has been speaking out against enforced disappearances in the country, was interrogated by National Security officers, before being transferred to East Cairo Prosecutor's Office later that morning for further questioning by the Public Prosecutor. On 27 April, the East Cairo Public Prosecutor extended his detention for a further 15 days.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah's arrest occurred the morning that new protests were planned in Cairo, as people took to the streets to demonstrate against a government decision to transfer to Saudi Arabia two islands in the Red Sea.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah's lawyers said he is accused of breaching the Counter-terrorism Law, the Protest Law and other laws regulating public assemblies, as well as “national security” offences under the Penal Code. He is facing specific charges of belonging to a banned “terrorist” group and attempting to overthrow the State. The charges carry up to 25 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International believes that Dr Ahmed Abdullah is being detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Some of the charges he faces criminalise the exercise of human rights; others are trumped up to punish him for his work as a human rights defender.

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

- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to release Dr Ahmed Abdullah immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to protect Dr Ahmed Abdullah from torture and other ill-treatment and ensure his allegation of ill-treatment is independently investigated;
- Calling on the authorities to drop the charges against him and end the harassment and intimidation of Dr Ahmed Abdullah, who is being targeted solely because of his human rights work.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 JUNE 2016 TO:

Public Prosecutor

Nabil Sadek
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Madinat Al-Rihab
New Cairo, Egypt
Salutation: Dear Counsellor

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 391 1441
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign
Affairs for Human Rights
Laila Bahaa El Din
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2574 9713
Email: Contact.Us@mfa.gov.eg
Twitter: @MfaEgypt

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR NASSER AHMED KAMEL ALI, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street W1K 1DW, 020 7499 3304/2401, Fax 020 7491 1542, egtamboff@gmail.com, and eg.emb_london@mfa.gov.eg Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 9/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/3204/2016/en/>

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The arrest of Dr Ahmed Abdullah was carried out by heavily armed, hooded security forces. During the arrest, his lawyer informed Amnesty International that an arresting officer used the butt of his weapon to strike Dr Ahmed Abdullah multiple times.

According to his lawyers, Dr Ahmed Abdullah faces multiple charges, including: inciting force to overthrow the State; inciting “terrorist” attacks on police stations; using violence and intimidation to impede the president’s duties and powers; belonging to a “terrorist group”; promoting “terrorism” online; inciting people to gather publicly in a way that will jeopardize public safety and security for “terrorism” purposes; disseminating news, information and “false rumours”; and possessing leaflets calling for the downfall of the government and changing Egypt’s constitution. Dr Ahmed Abdullah’s arrest is yet another blow to freedom of expression and association in Egypt, and takes place in the context of repression against Egyptian human rights defenders who have increasingly faced questioning, travel bans and asset freezes.

His arrest occurred as part of a widespread crackdown in the lead up to planned demonstrations on 25 April 2016, when people took to the streets to protest Egypt’s decision in early April to transfer two uninhabited islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia (see UA: 98/16 at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/3910/2016/en/>). Over 90 people were arrested in the days ahead of the protests, and at least 238 others on 25 April, according to Egyptian human rights groups and activists. The planned protests were quashed by a huge security presence across Cairo and waves of arrests, including the detention of Dr Ahmed Abdullah. Dr Ahmed Abdullah’s representatives told Amnesty International that an East Cairo prosecutor had issued a warrant for his arrest ahead of the protests, along with dozens of others.

As the director of the board of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), Dr Ahmed Abdullah has been leading the organization’s work on enforced disappearances in the country. In this capacity, he has been providing legal advice to the family of 28-year-old Italian PhD student Giulio Regeni, who went missing in Cairo on 25 January 2016 and whose body was later found on the outskirts of the city on 3 February. The family of Giulio Regeni issued a statement on 26 April, condemning Dr Ahmed Abdullah’s arrest and reiterating the ECRF’s commitment to seeking the truth about the abduction, torture and death of their son.

The Egyptian authorities have continuously harassed and intimidated Dr Ahmed Abdullah solely because of his human rights work and association with the ECRF. On 9 January 2016, three National Security officers in plain clothes raided a coffee shop in El Agouza, Cairo, where Dr Ahmed Abdullah is known to frequent. They showed no arrest or search warrant, but searched the coffee shop for Dr Abdullah and asked shop employees where he was.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah was previously a well-known figure in the “6 April Youth Movement”, a grassroots movement of young activists who protested against the Egyptian authorities during the 2011 uprising and in the years that followed. An Egyptian court banned the group in 2014, in a ruling Amnesty International considered to be politically motivated.

Name: Ahmed Abdullah

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 9/16 Index: MDE 12/3937/2016 Issue Date: 29 April 2016