

URGENT ACTION

AHMED ABDULLAH'S DETENTION ORDER RENEWED

Prisoner of conscience and human rights defender, Dr Ahmed Abdullah, had his detention renewed for a further 15 days on 7 May. He has been detained since 25 April solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Prisoner of conscience and head of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, **Dr Ahmed Abdullah**, had his detention renewed by a Cairo court for another 15 days on 7 May. He was charged in a case alongside 46 others, 19 of whom were in detention. The court on 7 May decided to release 14 of the detained defendants on bail while it renewed the detention of Ahmed Abdullah and four others. Dr Ahmed Abdullah's lawyers told Amnesty International that they don't have access to the casefile and are thus not able to prepare their defence.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah was arrested from his home ahead of planned protests in Cairo, as people took to the streets to demonstrate against the president's decision to transfer two islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia. Dr Ahmed Abdullah told his lawyers that he was ill-treated upon arrest by the security forces. He also said that he believes the real reason for his arrest is his work on enforced disappearance and on the case of Giulio Regeni, an Italian student who was tortured to death in Cairo in February this year. Dr Ahmed Abdullah has been providing legal advice and legal representation to Giulio Regeni's family.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah is facing a set of trumped-up charges under the draconian counter-terrorism law and protest laws, as well as under the Penal Code. He is facing specific charges of belonging to a banned "terrorist" group, using the internet to spread his "terrorist beliefs", attempting to overthrow the State, change the constitution of the country, and change the republican system of Egypt. If convicted he could face up to life imprisonment.

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 and association; all charges against him must be dropped;
- 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 refrain from targeting Ahmed Abdullah because of his work as a human rights defender on enforced disappearance and Giulio Regeni's case.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 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, 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 second update of UA 9/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/3937/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah's detention was renewed for 15 days on 7 May. He is being tried alongside 46 defendants, four of whom also had their detention renewed, while 14 others were released on bail: 11 with a bail of 10,000 EGP (US\$1,126) and three with a bail of 20,000 EGP (US\$2,252). The prosecution appealed against the decision to release the 14 individuals but on 9 May a court of appeal rejected the prosecution's appeal. Ahmed Abdullah and four others also appealed against the decision to renew their detention and the hearing date was set for 12 May.

The arrest of Dr Ahmed Abdullah 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. The arrest of Dr Ahmed Abdullah was carried out by heavily armed, masked 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.

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 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, which Dr Ahmed Abdullah is known to frequent. They showed no arrest or search warrant, but searched the coffee shop for him 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.

Further information on UA: 9/16 Index: MDE 12/4015/2016 Issue Date: 11 May 2016