

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' DETENTION RENEWED

Cairo judges ordered on 5 June the renewed detention of two human rights defenders, Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet. Both are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their human rights work with the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms.

Prisoners of conscience, **Dr Ahmed Abdullah** and **Mina Thabet**, will remain in detention for another 45 days and 15 days respectively, ruled the Marg Misdemeanour Court and the Ain Shams Misdemeanours Court in Cairo on 5 June. Their lawyers reported that they are still being denied access to the casefiles and are thus not able to prepare their defence.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet are facing a set of trumped-up charges under the draconian Counter-terrorism Law, the Protest Law, and the Penal Code. If convicted they could face up to life imprisonment.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah, director of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), was arrested from his home and ill-treated by security forces ahead of planned protests in Cairo on 25 April. Mina Thabet, director of the Minority and Religious Groups Department at the same organization, was arrested a few weeks later on 19 May during a raid on his home in Cairo. Mina Thabet and members of his family were ill-treated by Egyptian National Security Agents.

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

- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to release Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet immediately and unconditionally as both men are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly; all charges against them must be dropped;
- Calling on them to protect Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet from torture and other ill-treatment and ensure their allegations of ill-treatment are thoroughly, impartially, transparently and independently investigated;
- Calling on the authorities to refrain from targeting Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet because of their human rights work.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JULY 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. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

MR NASSER AHMED KAMEL ALI, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street W1K 1DW, Fax 020 7491 1542, Email egtamboff@gmail.com, and eg.emb_london@mfa.gov.eg, Salutation HIS EXCELLENCY

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 9/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/4015/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The arrest of Dr Ahmed Abdullah and Mina Thabet took place in the context of a widespread crackdown on Egyptian human rights defenders who have increasingly faced questioning, arrest, travel bans and the threat of asset freezes. Both men are staff members of ECRF, a non-governmental organisation which has been particularly active on reporting and documenting cases of enforced disappearances in the country.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah was arrested from his home by heavily armed, hooded security forces on 25 April 2016. 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. His home was searched and his laptop and mobile phone confiscated, before he was taken to New Cairo Police Station No 1. His arrest occurred as part of a nationwide crackdown in the lead up to planned demonstrations on 25 April, 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/>).

Dr Ahmed Abdullah has had his detention renewed four times since his arrest: on 27 April, 7 May, 21 May and 5 June. He is being held in New Cairo Police Station No. 1. As the director of the board of the 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.

Mina Thabet was arrested a few weeks after Dr Ahmed Abdullah, on 19 May, when he was seized during a raid on his home by members of Egypt's National Security Agency. He told his lawyer that he was ill-treated upon arrest alongside his family members. Following his arrest, the Egyptian authorities refused to disclose his place of detention. Mina Thabet had his detention renewed for 15 days on 21 May and then again on 5 June. The Misdemeanour Appeals Court of Elwaily rejected Mina Thabet's appeal against the decision on 8 June. Mina Thabet has worked to defend the rights of minority groups, specifically Coptic Christians since the 2011 uprising. Mina Thabet is being held in Elsalam Police Station No. 1 in Cairo. Mina Thabet and Dr Ahmed Abdullah are being tried alongside 45 other defendants. According to their lawyers, both men face 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. Some of the evidence against Mina Thabet includes a diary with a picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, documents on international human rights law, including on minorities; as well as documents on a legally registered political party called the Bread and Freedom Party.