

# URGENT ACTION

## SHAWKAN'S TRIAL ADJOURNED UNTIL 28 JUNE

**A Cairo court adjourned to 28 June the trial of photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid, popularly known as Shawkan. He is a prisoner of conscience facing nine trumped-up charges and is at risk of the death penalty, if convicted.**

On 21 May the Cairo Criminal Court adjourned the case of photojournalist **Mahmoud Abu Zeid** and 738 other defendants to 28 June. According to one of his lawyers, the trial has been adjourned to give enough time for lawyers to take a look at technical documents that the prosecution presented to the court, as well as videos and flash drives that are supposed to contain evidence backing up the charges against the defendants. These video recordings are expected to be presented to the courtroom at the next session.

At the 21 May session, Mahmoud Abu Zeid had an opportunity to address the court and spoke directly to the judge. He told him about the circumstances of his arrest on 14 August 2013, and that he was just doing his job as a photojournalist. "Taking pictures isn't a crime," Mahmoud told the judge.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid, also known as Shawkan, was arrested while he was photographing the violent dispersal by security forces of the Rabaa al-Adaweya sit-in in Cairo. He has been held far in excess of the two-year detention limit set out in Article 143 of Egypt's Code of Criminal Procedures for those at risk of life imprisonment or the death penalty. The law says that they must be sentenced within a two-year period, or otherwise released immediately. His lawyers' requests for his release have been unsuccessful so far. He is still detained in Tora Prison.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid is being tried in a mass trial with 738 other defendants, including leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. He faces nine trumped-up charges, which include "joining a criminal gang" and "murder". He has denied the charges against him. Mahmoud Abu Zeid is now receiving medication for Hepatitis C, but only sporadically, according to his lawyer.

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

- Urging the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against Mahmoud Abu Zeid and release him 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 provide Mahmoud Abu Zeid with any medical treatment he may require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 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 2391 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 Your Excellency

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahmoud Abu Zeid is a freelance photojournalist, who was arrested while on assignment for London-based photo agency Demotix. Two foreign journalists were also arrested with him, but they were released on the same day. Demotix told the Prosecutor's Office that Mahmoud Abu Zeid was on assignment with them, but he was still detained. Shawkan previously worked for a range of publications, including Time magazine, the German national weekly newspaper Die Zeit and German tabloid BILD.

His detention order has been renewed repeatedly to allow for questioning and investigations by the Public Prosecution.

Mahmoud Abu Zeid has said police and soldiers beat him during his first day under arrest and on 17 August 2013, when he was transferred from an overcrowded cell at a police station in Cairo to the capital's Abu Zaabal Prison. According to his later, published by Amnesty International on 5 April 2015, officers punched and kicked him, and beat him with batons. He was also kept in a parked truck for eight hours when the temperature was above 30 degrees centigrade, without food, water or fresh air when he got to Abu Zaabal Prison. In the letter, he described his indefinite detention as "psychologically unbearable".

The proceedings against Shawkan have been unfair. His lawyers have repeatedly been denied access to key documents relating to the case, including the list of charges. This has made it difficult for them to prepare his defence. Mass trials also make it difficult to ensure the right to a fair trial is guaranteed for each of the defendants. The Egyptian authorities have used mass trials to target opposition groups, with many of those put on trial facing trumped-up charges without proving each defendant's individual criminal responsibility.

The trial of Shawkan and 738 others is being held in a building annexed to the Tora Prison called the Tora Police Institute. The defendants are kept in a glass, soundproof dock when they are brought into the courtroom and listen to the proceedings through headsets that make it hard to hear, according to one of the lawyers. They cannot address the court unless the judge permits them to leave the glass dock to do so.

Egypt is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 9 of which prohibits arbitrary detention. Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Article 14 guarantees the right of everyone to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. The article further guarantees the rights of everyone facing criminal charges to be informed promptly of the nature and cause of the charges against them; the right to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of their defence; the right to be tried in their presence; and the right to examine, or have examined, the witnesses against them.