



Egypt: 2 year jail sentence in appeal for Yara Sallam and 23 other protesters

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (joint FIDH-OMCT programme) and Front Line Defenders strongly condemn the two year jail sentence handed down by the appeal court, sitting in New Cairo Police Academy, on Sunday 28 December 2014 for **Yara Sallam**, Transitional Justice Officer at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and 23 other young activists, including Ms. **Sanaa Seif**, a member of the “No to Military Trials for Civilians” movement and sister of blogger **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, for allegedly violating Egypt's controversial Protest Law.

Since its implementation in 2013, Egypt's Protest Law has been increasingly used to suppress and imprison political activists and dissenters, as well as human rights defenders. The judgement and sentence in this case is yet another example of the Egyptian judiciary effectively shutting down the democratic means by which citizens can question and/or criticise the current regime.

Human rights groups across Egypt and internationally have called the charges against Yara Sallam and the other activists baseless, describing the case as yet another "show-trial" based on scant evidence and intended to warn citizens against defying government policies.

Despite the lack of any credible evidence and clear inconsistencies in the police reports of the events which took place on 21 June 2013 outside Itihadeya Palace, on 26 October 2014, a Misdemeanor Court sentenced Yara Sallam and the other defendants to three years in prison, three years of probation, and an LE 10,000 fine for breaching the repressive Protest Law and other trumped-up charges including damaging property and “displaying force”. The judgement handed down by the Appeal Court on 28 December 2014 reduced this sentence to two years, cancelled the fine and reduced the period of police surveillance following release to two years.

The EMHRN, the Observatory and Front Line Defenders call for this verdict and sentence to be immediately overturned, the 23 defendants to be immediately released, the Protest Law to be repealed or amended to allow for proper freedom of assembly in Egypt in accordance with international standards, and for the judiciary to assert its independence from the Egyptian authorities and to ensure the implementation, promotion and protection of the rule of law.