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The Observatory
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of Human Rights Defenders



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

EGYPT: Detention of blogger Alaa Abd El-Fattah extended

Paris-Geneva-Copenhagen, November 29, 2011. As the international attention is focusing on renewed tension and clashes on Tahrir Square and the first parliamentary elections to be held after the departure of Mubarak, the Egyptian authorities are pursuing the judicial harassment of human rights activists. Today, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), jointly with the Euromediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) deplore the extension of the detention of human rights blogger Alaa Abd El-Fattah for another 15 days pending further investigations, as a lack of meaningful progress in Egypt.

On November 27, 2011, the Supreme State Security Prosecution extended the detention of Mr. **Alaa Abd El-Fattah** for another 15 days pending the end of investigation into charges of “unlawful assembly”, “vandalism” and “resisting arrest” during the Maspero events of October 9. On October 30, the military police arrested Abd El-Fattah as well as another blogger, Mr. **Bahaa Saber**, who was later placed in provisional release in October, on accusation of fuelling violence that occurred at the Maspero State TV building. Both are still under investigation.

The two bloggers were interrogated on their involvement in the October 9 demonstration of Coptic-Christians held before the Maspero building in down-town Cairo¹, which was severely repressed by the military forces, resulting in the death of 27 persons, refused to answer questions arguing that the Military Prosecutor did not have competence to interrogate civilians. The two activists had been publicly criticising the fact that the Military Prosecution is in charge of investigating the Maspero clashes, in which military police would be involved and opposing the trial of civilians before military courts.

Following order of the Head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) Field Marshal Tantawi based on SCAF communiqué 82 issued on November 22, 2011, the Maspero clashes case was referred from military to civil prosecution. Though it was expected that the case be referred to the general prosecution, it was transferred to the High State Security Prosecution, which is an exceptional prosecution body that functions under emergency law and does not provides for appeals but only pardons from the head of state. Our organisations recall that the rights of defence and the guarantees of a fair trial are not ensured before such courts of exception and condemn what they see as a step back into the dark times of the former regime.

Our organisations call upon the Egyptian authorities to allow the conduct of impartial and independent investigations into the “Maspero” killings by the office of the public prosecutor, prosecute those responsible for the serious human rights violations that were committed and urge the Egyptian authorities to stop trying civilians before military and State security courts, notably human rights defenders.

Our organisations call upon the military authorities to immediately release Mr. Alaa Abdel-Fatah and stop the judicial harassment against Messrs. Alaa Abdel-Fatah and Bahaa Saber, as their detention and judicial harassment seem to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities, and more generally to conform to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments ratified by Egypt.

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¹ Maespero is the Nationale TV building.