



Press release

- Under strict embargo until 09:00am (GMT) on 10 November 2021 -

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Egypt asked to suspend death penalties of 26 detainees by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has issued an urgent injunction (special measures) against Egypt, ordering it to suspend the death penalties it had issued against 26 detainees whilst it considers a complaint submitted by former senior members of the Egyptian Freedom & Justice Party (FJP). The FJP was the political party of the democratically elected government of Egypt that was ousted in 2013 following a violent coup.

The complaint followed a decision made on 14 June 2021 by the Egyptian Court of Cassation to confirm the 26 men's death penalties. The decision, by Egypt's highest appeals Court, rendered the men at risk of immediate execution, despite them being convicted in mass trials which were heavily criticised for severe due process irregularities and fair trial violations by leading international human rights organisations.

The confirmation decision by the Court came after the 26 men and 49 other Egyptians were tried and sentenced in 2018, and represents the final appeal possible under Egyptian law against the death sentences on the grounds of fair trial violations.

The original charges against the men related to their participation in pro-democracy protests against the coup in Rab'a al-Adawiya square in 2013. Charges were initiated against 739 individuals in what became known as the 'dispersal of Rab'a Al-Adawya sit-in case.'

Complaints about the trials included failing to meet basic fair trial standards, hearings involving large numbers of defendants and a failure to identify specific allegations against each of the defendants. Despite these and other significant irregularities, the court handed down 75 death sentences, 47 life sentences, and heavy prison sentences ranging from 15 to five years to 612 people. The men have no further rights of appeal in Egypt.

The convictions and resulting sentences have been widely criticised and condemned by international organisations for being grossly unfair and riddled with serious due process violations, violating both Egyptian law and international standards.

Egypt has been granted 15 days to confirm that the special measures will be implemented and 60 days to present arguments with regards to the admissibility of the men's complaint.

Tayab Ali, Partner at Bindmans LLP who submitted the complaint said:

"The international community turned a blind eye to the serious human rights violations that have been committed by the Egyptian authorities since the coup in 2013. Egypt's final phase is to try to silence opposition voices through the use of sham trials and the death penalty. These men have no recourse to further appeals within Egypt and now will rely entirely on the case submitted to the African Commission to determine their fate. They have been failed by the Egyptian legal system and the international community. Failure by the African Commission will mean that these men will lose their lives for nothing more than supporting the idea that Egypt should be a democracy."

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