



DEATH PENALTY CRISIS IN EGYPT: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST CALL FOR AN END TO ALL EXECUTIONS IN EGYPT

June 2021

We call on the international community to urgently and publicly condemn the escalating use of the death penalty in Egypt. We specifically ask the international community to call for an immediate end to executions in the country, particularly the imminent executions of 12 men sentenced in a politically motivated mass trial.

On 14 August 2013, the largely peaceful Raba'a sit-in protesting the army's removal of President Mohamed Morsi ended when security forces violently dispersed the crowds, killing hundreds and injuring over 1,000 protesters. Despite the Egyptian state conducting an investigation into the massacre, we are not aware that any official has been held accountable. Rather, hundreds of defendants have been tried and sentenced to death in a number of mass trials. While these are the first death sentences to be upheld in trials relating to the events at Raba'a, dozens of executions have been carried out after mass trials since 2013.

The 12 men now facing imminent execution were sentenced to death in a mass trial of 739 defendants. We understand that no individualized evidence was presented at any point and the defense was not given the opportunity to defend individual clients. Initially 75 people were sentenced to death. During hearings, hundreds of defendants were crowded together in a soundproof cell, impeding their ability to communicate with lawyers and to hear what was happening.

On 14 June 2021 the Court of Cassation commuted 31 of these sentences to life imprisonment but upheld 12 of the death sentences. These 12 men will face imminent execution within 14 days of confirmation of the sentences, unless the Egyptian President intervenes to pardon the men or commute their sentences. The remaining defendants were sentenced in absentia, and so their cases were not considered by the Court of Cassation.

The 12 men now at risk of imminent execution include Dr Osama Yassin, paediatrician, father of four, and Minister of Youth in former President Morsi's cabinet. The conditions of Dr Yassin's detention have been appalling. He has been held in solitary confinement since 2013, and his family report that he has been routinely denied food, clean water, access to the outdoors, exercise, and provisions such as books, his copy of the Qur'an, and blankets. He has also been denied access to lawyers and family visits for periods lasting years.

These sentences are the latest development in Egypt's escalating death penalty crisis, detailed in recent reports from a number of civil society organisations, including Reprieve and Amnesty International. Following the record 152 executions in 2020, at least 57 people have been executed since the start of 2021 including Father Isaiah, a Coptic Christian monk who was tortured into confessing to the murder of a Bishop. Although it has been extremely rare for executions to take place during Rama-



dan in Egypt, at least 17 people were executed during the Islamic holy month this year. These executions, and the execution of Father Isaiah, took place without prior notification to the families of the prisoners, and an elderly man over the age of 80 was amongst those executed.

International intervention can be life-saving. We are urging the international community to make immediate interventions to publicly condemn the death penalty crisis in Egypt and to:

- Call on the Egyptian President to immediately institute a moratorium on all executions in Egypt, and commute the death sentences of the 12 men sentenced in relation to the Raba'a dispersal case; and
- Call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately end the use of mass trials, which violate the fair trial and due process guarantees enshrined in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Freedom Initiative

Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN)

Legal Awareness Watch Pakistan

Kenya Human Rights Commission

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Harm Reduction International

Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan

Puerto Rico Bar Association

International Commission of Jurists

Hands off Cain

lifespark

The Sunny Center, Foundation USA Inc.

Federazione Italiana Diritti Umani

Death Penalty Focus

German Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Capital Punishment Justice Project

Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN)

Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL)

Committee for Justice

Eleos Justice, Monash University

ECPM (Together against the death penalty)

Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)

Journey of Hope

REPECAP- Academicsforabolition.net

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Southern Methodist University (SMU) Human Rights program

The Advocates for Human Rights

Human Rights Watch

REPRIEVE



lifespark
movement against the death penalty



Capital Punishment Justice Project



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي

Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide
Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran
Reprieve