

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypte-two-bloggers-who-symbolise-the-31-10-2011/41301.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Egypt

Pressure on blogger

Military court postpones verdict, presses blogger to apologise

7 December 2011

Reporters Without Borders condemns the latest adjournment in detained blogger **Maikel Nabil Sanad's** retrial on a charge of insulting the military. The Cairo military court had been expected to issue a verdict at today's hearing but instead the judge postponed the verdict until 14 December without explaining why.

During today's hearing, Sanad was offered the use of a computer in his cell in Cairo's El-Marg prison so that he could post an apology on the Internet. After he rejected the offer, he was escorted back to the prison to await next week's hearing.

"This trial is just a sham," Reporters Without Borders said. "By systematically postponing its verdict without giving any grounds, the military court is playing for time in order to keep Sanad in detention and force him to confess to a crime he did not commit. We urge the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to free him without delay."

Two bloggers who symbolise the revolution are still behind bars 2011.12.06

Reporters Without Borders deplores the continued detention of the Egyptian bloggers **Alaa Abdelfattah** and **Maikel Nabil Sanad**, in custody respectively for one month and eight months. Almost 10 months after the end of Hosni Mubarak's rule, the Egyptian authorities are still pursuing a policy of repression towards bloggers and the Internet.

Alaa Abdel Fattah to stay in custody



The High State Security Court in Cairo yesterday rejected Alaa Abdel Fattah's application for bail.

The netizen was arrested and taken into custody on 30 October. He first appeared before a military court, where he was charged with the theft of a weapon belonging to a soldier, assaulting army personnel, destruction of military property and incitement to violence against the military during riots in the Cairo district of Maspero on 9 October.

He refused to answer questions from the court in protest against the regular practice of trying civilians before military courts.

His case was transferred to a civilian court, the High State Security Court, on 22 November. Far from showing greater leniency, this court added other serious charges to the case against him, namely premeditated murder with the intent of committing an act of terrorism. If he is convicted, there will be no right of appeal against the verdict.

At the next hearing due on 13 December, he could be remanded in custody for a further two weeks for the third time in succession.

A petition in support of the detained blogger can be accessed online.

Verdict looms in trial of Maikel Nabil Sanad

Reporters Without Borders condemns the political trial of the blogger and prisoner of conscience Maikel Nabil Sanad.

Since hearings have been postponed many times, the netizen has so far been in prison for more than eight months. The military court announced two days ago that the military will announce its final judgement tomorrow, after once again rejecting his application for bail.

Sanad was confined to the El-Khanka psychiatric clinic in Qalubiyah province on the orders of a judge on 18 October. He was subsequently transferred to Cairo's El-Marg prison after a favourable medical diagnosis. His family was allowed to visit him yesterday as he began the 105th day of a hunger strike. He is also suffering from kidney stones.

The blogger recently highlighted the crackdown carried out by the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in a blog post on the NGO website Mideast Youth.



Reporters Without Borders published a report on 1 December entitled "Upheaval in the Arab world: Media as key witnesses and political pawns", which analyses the methods used by the authorities to prevent the flow of information in six countries where there have been popular uprisings, from 17 December 2010 to mid-November this year. It includes a section on Egypt.

During rioting on the eve of the elections in late November, many netizens were arrested or assaulted by troops.

The press freedom organization again urges the Egyptian authorities to halt threats of any kind towards netizens and media workers and to end the political trials of Alaa Abdel Fattah and Maikel Nabil Sanad, who should be exonerated and released unconditionally.

Military prosecutors detain blogger in connection with Copt demonstration 2011.10.31

Reporters Without Borders condemns yesterday's decision by military prosecutors in Cairo to detain the activist and blogger **Alaa Abdelfattah** for a minimum period of 15 days on a charge of inciting violence at a protest by Coptic Christians on 9 October.

"The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces must put a complete end to prosecutions of civilians before military courts or else it will endanger the success of Egypt's transition to democracy," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The army, which oversees the prosecutor's office that has charged Abdelfattah, is itself suspected of involvement in the violence being blamed on him. The Supreme Council's methods are jeopardizing the establishment of impartial justice in post-Mubarak Egypt."

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate release of Abdelfattah and all the other civilians and political prisoners held by the armed forces, including the netizen **Maikel Nabil Sanad**, who continues to be detained although his physical condition is now critical.

Situation for netizens worsens in post-Mubarak Egypt 27.10.11

Although the United Nations special rapporteur for freedom of expression, Frank La Rue, reiterated the importance of protecting online freedom of expression in a report to the General Assembly last week, Egypt is pursuing increasingly repressive policies towards the Internet and bloggers.

Free expression in Facebook threatened

In one of the latest cases, **Ayman Youssef Mansour**, a netizen who was arrested in August, was sentenced by a Cairo court on 22 October to three years of forced labour on a charge of deliberately insulting, attacking and mocking Islam on Facebook.

"Without taking a position on the content of Mansour's posts, we regret that a law that bans insulting a religion was used to punish a blogger," Reporters Without Borders said. "This vaguely worded law was often used under Hosni Mubarak to silence dissidents. The blogger **Kareem Amer**, for example, was given a jail sentence in 2007 on a charge of insulting the Prophet. The former regime's practices are being continued by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces."

Jailed blogger given 45 days in psychiatric clinic

Reporters Without Borders also deplores the fact that the imprisoned blogger **Maikel Nabil Sanad** has been confined to El-Khanka psychiatric clinic in Qalubiyah province for 45 days under a court order issued at a hearing in his retrial on 18 October. The next hearing is scheduled for 1 November.

His lawyer, Mahdoudh Nakhla, the header of the Al-Kalema Centre for Human Rights, fears that Sanad could be subjected to electroconvulsive therapy, which he describes as "legalized torture." Detained since March, Sanad is already suffering from renal and neurological problems, anemia and other complication from his hunger strike. ECT could prove fatal.

"Sanad, who has been on a hunger strike for two months and has serious health problems,

will not get the treatment he needs in a psychiatric establishment,” Reporters Without Borders said. “He must be freed as a matter of urgency and given appropriate medical care. If he dies in detention, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces will be held entirely responsible for the death of the first prisoner of conscience since the revolution.”

Two cyber-activists summoned by military court

Reporters Without Borders is also worried that two cyber-activists – **Alaa Abd El Fattah** and **Bahaa Saber** – were summoned on 24 October to appear the next day before a military court that is investigating the Coptic Christian protests in Cairo on 9 October that ended in violence.

Their appearance has been postponed because Fattah, a blogger and software developer, is currently in San Francisco attending the Silicon Valley Human Rights Conference. Fattah and Saber were already detained in 2006 for expressing anti-Mubarak views online. Saber was arrested and tortured again in 2010.

It is not known what they may be charged with but they have been informally warned that they are to be questioned about their coverage of the Copt protests. Fattah said on Twitter that he would probably be accused of inciting violence and destruction of public property. During the protest, both actively helped victims of the violence and their families, and helped take the injured to hospital.

A pro-Mubarak video-blogger nicknamed Ahmed “Spider” has posted a video on YouTube entitled “Alaa Abd El Fattah the atheist runs away to America after I submitted a case against him.”

Opposition to the Supreme Council’s measures is growing. Referring to Sanad’s confinement in a psychiatric hospital, writer and activist **Willima Weesa** wrote: “This decision violates his civil rights. Many people who have been confined [to psychiatric institutions] by the security forces have entered in good health and emerged devastated.”

Yosri Foudra, a former *BBC* and *Al-Jazeera* journalist who now hosts a public affairs programme on privately-owned *ONTV*, suspended his programme on 21 October in protest against the continuation of Mubarak-style censorship methods since the revolution. **Alaa El-Aswani**, a writer who has often criticized the military, wrote on Twitter. “Is it now forbidden for anyone to criticize the Supreme Council? The revolution needs a new chapter.”



Protesters mobilised against police violence after blogger’s death in 2010.

Reporters Without Borders meanwhile welcomes the seven-year jail sentences that a court passed on two policemen, Mahmoud Salah Mahmoud and Awad Ismael Soliman, yesterday for beating the young netizen **Khaled Said** to death as he left an Internet café in Alexandria on 6 June 2010. They were initially accused of just unwarranted arrest and torture (read article).



The two policemen accused of beating Khaled Saïd to death.
