



CENTER FOR TRADE UNION & WORKERS SERVICES

(CTUWS)

Honored the French Republic's Human Rights Prize

One Year Imprisonment For Mr. Kamal Abbas CTUWS' General Coordinator For Publishing Corruption Cases

In what appears to be a link in the series of court sentences that restrict the freedom of publishing, or one of those procedures which target the Center for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS) since the beginning of this year, Helwan Court of Misdemeanors headed by Judge Mohamed Rashad issued a sentence of one year imprisonment for Mr. Kamal Abbas the General Coordinator of CTUWS and Mr. Mohamed Helmy (Lawyer) in the law suit No. 269 of 2007, Misdemeanors/ 15 May City.

Mr. Mohamed Mustafa Ibrahim member of the National Democratic Party (NDP) who was NDP's candidate for the previous parliamentary elections and chairman of the board of directors of the Youth Center of the 15th May City (in its former structure) had filed that misdemeanor against both Kamal Abbas and Mohamed Helmy and claimed that they have publicly abused and defamed him in his public representative capacity (as the chairman of the Youth Center) by publishing in Kalam Sanay'iya Magazine (which is the non periodical magazine of the CTUWS).

It is worthy mentioning that the issuance of this sentence against CTUWS' General Coordinator (the facts of which are not deposited to date) was postponed for several times since the end of last May. It was issued particularly in this timing when several sentences of imprisonment are issued in law suits of publishing.

The sentence came contrary to what was expected according to the facts and circumstances of the claim. What happened is that Mohamed Helmy (who is a board member of the Youth Center) together with another five board members requested the concerned authorities to investigate certain actions of the chairman of the board of directors of the Youth Center and presented the documents that prove the validity of their claim. The same asserting documents were presented to the court.

It is astonishing that the same facts which Mohamed Helmy has referred to were investigated by the General Committee of the Financial and Administrative inspection and that the Committee submitted its report on the subject on 28/1/2007. The report asserted a number of financial and administrative contraventions attributed to Mohamed Mustafa Ibrahim the chairman of the board of directors of the Youth Center. The Committee recommended to suspend him and to assign the deputy chairman in his place.

Cairo/ Egypt

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More astonishing is that the Governor of Cairo has issued a decision over one month ago to dissolve the board of directors of the 15th May City Youth Center. The decision is based upon a memorandum of the president of the National Council for Youth and Sports which contained the contraventions attributed to Mohamed Mustafa Ibrahim. Thus, Mohamed Mustafa Ibrahim loses his “representative capacity” which he relied upon in his law suit (as he does not have any other public representative capacity).

Now, we have a court sentence to imprison citizens who published facts about corruption cases. These cases were proved true. Not only this, they were the basis for legal decisions and changing legal positions. Does this mean that we give impunity to corruption and immunity against any criticism or disclosure? Is this believable?

The sentence against Kamal Abbas the General Coordinator of CTUWS and Mohamed Helmy member of the board of directors of 15th May Youth Center (which is dissolved) is a new indicative model for the seriousness of the imprisonment penalty for publishing and the court sentences which are issued without legal causation. This raises concerns about the possibility of extending these sentences as an impending threat.

The CTUWS expresses its extreme concern about the issuance of such a sentence against its General Coordinator and the lawyer Mr. Mohamed Helmy. The CTUWS is concerned that court sentences can become a link in the series of arbitrary procedures to which it is subjected since several months ago. The CTUWS expresses its rejection to issue imprisonment sentences against journalists and other citizens based upon legal provisions which ought to be nullified because they violate the right of expression and human rights and contravene the Egyptian constitution which stipulated in its 47th Article that “*Freedom of opinion shall be guaranteed. Every individual shall have the right to express his opinion and to publicise it verbally, in writing, by photography or by other means of expression within the limits of the law. Self criticism and constructive criticism shall guarantee the safety of the national structure*”.

The CTUWS, having appealed this unbelievable sentence, calls upon all the democratic powers which defend the freedom of expression to annul the penalties which restrict the freedom in publishing cases, and calls upon them to express solidarity with the CTUWS in these circumstances.

**The Center for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS)
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