

Egypt sentences photojournalist Shawkan to five years

The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned an Egyptian court's sentencing of photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid, also known as "Shawkan," to five years in prison, and called on authorities to release him immediately and remove any restriction on his release on appeal.



Egyptian photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid, also known as Shawkan, looks on behind bars in his trial on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt, on May 31, 2016. Shawkan was sentenced to five years in prison on September 8, 2018. Credit: Reuters/Amr Abdallah Dalsh/CPJ.

The [award-winning photojournalist](#) was [convicted](#) last week on charges of murder and membership of a terrorist group, according to [news reports](#). He is due for release within a few days after already having spent five years in jail, his lawyer Karim Abdelrady said, according to the same reports.

Abdelrady wrote on his Twitter [page](#), and the journalist's brother Mohamed told CPJ, that Shawkan will be released under "police observation" for five years, meaning he will have to appear at a police station every day at sunset. Mohamed added that the journalist and his lawyer will appeal the verdict in Egypt's court of cassation.

"We are relieved that Shawkan, whose only 'crime' was taking pictures, can finally walk out of prison, but he will not be fully free," said Sherif Mansour, CPJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator.

"His treatment, and that of scores of other journalists under Egypt's totally discredited judicial system, is a stain on Egypt. The least the authorities can now do is to release him without any restrictions whatsoever on his right to live and work freely."

“ *BREAKING: [#Egypt](#) hand down 75 [#deathpenalty](#) sentences and 47 life sentences, in a mass trial related to the al-Rabaa protest in 2013. Among those sentenced was photojournalist [#Shawkan](#) who received 5 years. Read more about his case here: <https://t.co/pZRLH6SCvr> pic.twitter.com/vnCypRWsf7— Amnesty UK (@AmnestyUK) [September 8, 2018](#)* ”

With 20 journalists behind bars when CPJ conducted its [most recent annual prison census](#), Egypt is the third worst jailer of journalists worldwide. Shawkan has been imprisoned since August 14, 2013, when he was [arrested](#) while covering clashes between Egyptian security forces and supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi for the UK-based photo agency Demotix.

His family has [expressed](#) grave concern for his health. Even as authorities have prolonged cases such as Shawkan's, they have continued to arrest and charge more journalists in recent months, [CPJ research](#) shows.

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