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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

CO-CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE  
  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
  
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL  
AND ANTITRUST LAW  
  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY  
  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS  
  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST  
AND NORTH AFRICA

July 24, 2018

The Honorable President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi  
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
3521 International Court, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express support for an immediate dismissal of the case against Mahmoud Abou Zeid, often referred to as “Shawkan,” who is currently being held in criminal detention by Egypt and is scheduled for sentencing on July 28, 2018 for capital offenses. Based on the information available, I urge you to weigh in and support the immediate release of Shawkan or, at the very least, support an individual trial so that evidence specific to his case can be heard and considered. In light of reports about his failing health, I would also request that his health needs be assessed and treatment be provided as soon as possible.

Shawkan is a freelance photojournalist whose work has been published in international publications including *Time Magazine* and *The New York Times*. On August 14, 2013, he was working under contract for Demotix, Ltd., a London-based journalism and photography agency. While photographing the events occurring in Raba’a Square, he was taken into custody along with approximately 900 individuals who were participating in the event he was covering. As reported by French freelance artist-photographer Louis Jammes and U.S. reporter Michael Giglio—two other photojournalists who were arrested in the same location—they were all staying out of the way of the security forces and taking pictures when they were suddenly arrested and grouped with the protesters.

Shawkan was held in pretrial detention between August 14, 2013 and March 26, 2016 without any charges, exceeding the maximum amount of time allowed under Egyptian law. He was then charged with committing terrorist actions and criminal offenses including murder, attempted murder, infringing upon policemen and civilians, and burning and vandalizing public and private properties—the same charges brought against the hundreds of protesters arrested that day.

Shawkan was tried with approximately 700 other defendants. The presiding magistrate did not hear evidence specific to Shawkan’s case. I am certain that, had the magistrate reviewed the evidence proving that Shawkan was present at Raba’a in his capacity as a contracted photojournalist and the witness statement confirming that he was not participating in any other activity before or during his arrest, as well as the fact that he had no weapons at the time of his

arrest and his prior Facebook posts condemning the Muslim Brotherhood, the court would have decided in his favor and released him.

In 2014, Egypt ratified a new Constitution and entered a new era. In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014, you announced an aim to build a “New Egypt” that respects the rights and freedoms of its citizens and guarantees the freedom of speech. Indeed, your nation’s Constitution enshrines the freedoms of assembly, thought, and artistic creation as well as the freedom of the press and a prohibition on censorship. It also recognizes as law international conventions which it has ratified; this includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protect both the right to due process and freedom of expression.

Having been made aware of Shawkan’s case, through the House of Representatives’ Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission’s Defending Freedoms Project, as well as through the extensive media coverage and reporting by human rights, intergovernmental, and press freedom organizations, such as Reporters Without Borders, I have decided to advocate on behalf of Shawkan and appeal to you to help secure his release or, at minimum, secure a new trial to review the circumstances of his arrest and the exculpatory evidence in his case.

The world is watching. Under the Egyptian constitution and criminal code, Shawkan can be released based on his pretrial detention period. But, at the very least, Egyptian law requires that his case receive an individualized hearing with the opportunity to present evidence and receive consideration of evidence specific to his case. Releasing Shawkan would be an important step that would communicate to the world your nation’s commitment to a “New Egypt” that respects rule of law and the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Attachments:

Letter of Accreditation of Mahmoud Abou Zeid from from Ossie Ikeogu, Demotix News Desk  
Director Demotix, Ltd.

Witness Letter from Journalist Louis Jammes

# DEMOTIX

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## LETTER OF ACCREDITATION

24<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

Whom it may concern,

This letter is to certify that Mahmoud Abou Zied is a member of the Demotix news agency.

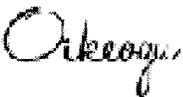
Demotix is a London-based photo news agency with thousands of contributors around the world, whose work has reached millions of people through placements in such media organizations as the BBC, the UK Guardian, The New York Times, Bild and Le Monde. We were more recently acquired by Corbis Corporation.

We can confirm that Mahmoud was freelancing for Demotix on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013 and we were expecting his coverage that evening. Through Demotix he has sold his work to publications including Scanpix Denmark & Norway, Index on Censorship, Bild, Open Democracy, TIME Magazine, Profimedia, Bauer Media Group, HH Saudi Research, Die Zeit, Arabian Eye, RCS Media Group, IFEX, TIME Inc., and many more.

If you need to verify the authenticity of this letter, contact me at the Demotix editorial desk in London at +44 207 664 7501 or, preferably, by email at [ossie@demotix.com](mailto:ossie@demotix.com).

Again, we request that you give Mahmoud all due rights, privileges and considerations as a member of an international media organization. If you have questions, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards,



Ossie Ikeogu

News Desk Director

Demotix Ltd. Reg: 6538160 VAT: 938077591

Louis Jammes 114 avenue des cigales 11100 Narbonne FRANCE

Passeport n° 13AA55135 3

Artiste français, photographe d'art, j'ai séjourné une première fois au Caire les mois de Juin et Juillet 2012. C'est lors de ce voyage que j'ai rencontré Mahmoud Abou Zeid. Partageant la même passion pour la photographie, il s'est montré intéressé par mon travail. Il a réalisé mon portrait en m'expliquant qu'il travaillait pour l'agence britannique Demotix. Portrait que j'ai publié sur mon mur facebook. Après mon retour en France, nous avons entretenu le contact via nos pages facebook. C'est tout naturellement lors de mon second séjour en Egypte et de mon retour au Caire en cette fin juin 2013 que j'ai revu Mahmoud Abou Zeid. Après plusieurs rencontres amicales nous avons choisi de travailler et faire des photos ensemble. Ainsi nous nous sommes retrouvés place Tahrir au cours des événements du mois de Juillet 2013 Le 14 août au matin nous avons décidé de visiter le campement de Rabaa, moi pour alimenter mon travail personnel, et Mahmoud Abou Zeid travaillant pour son agence Demotix. Nous sommes arrivés ensemble en taxi très tôt, vers les 05h00. Nous avons marché constamment cote à cote à photographier le campement pendant deux heures. Lorsque vers 07h00, l'alerte fut donnée, Mahmoud Abou Zeid m'a clairement exprimé sa volonté de sortir du campement et je l'ai suivi. Ensemble nous sommes rapidement sortis et nous avons rejoint les forces de police qui progressaient en direction du campement. Mahmoud Abou Zeid n'avait sur lui que ses appareils photo et un petit sac de ceinture, tout comme moi. A l'extérieur du camp et à hauteur des forces de police nous avons photographié les événements pendant environ une heure de plus, jusqu'à 08h00. Michael Giglio journaliste à Newsweek se trouvait également sur place. Et c'est alors au alentour de 08h00 que la police a commencé à arrêter les gens présents. J'ai été interpellé par les forces de police au coté de Mahmoud Abou Zeid et de Michael Giglio. Une heure après, une fois nos identités vérifiées, Michael Giglio et moi, nous fûmes relâchés. Jusqu'à son arrestation et depuis notre arrivée sur les lieux, soit environ trois heures de temps, je suis resté en présence de Mahmoud Abou Zeid. Je peux témoigner qu'il n'était équipé que de ses seuls appareils photo, et qu'il ne faisait que son travail de photographe d'agence.

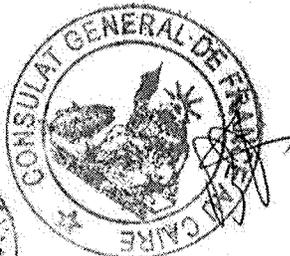


Jammes

Caire le 01 Septembre 2013

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|---|
| REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE                      |
| LEGALISATION                              |
| (DECRET N° 2007-1265 DU 10 AOUT 2007)     |
| DESTINATION DE L'ACTE (PAYS OU AUTORITE): |
| DATE: - 1 SEP 2013 = Egypte =             |
| NOM ET QUALITE DE L'AGENT :               |
| SIGNATURE                                 |
| ET CACHET OBLIGATOIRE :                   |

وزارة الخارجية جمهورية مصر العربية  
مكتب التصديقات والخدمات التصديقية للمواطنين  
ديوان الوزارة  
رقم التصديق 11111  
تصدق على صحة وثائق السيد /  
الجنرال / السيد /  
دون ادنى مسؤولية فيما يتعلق بصحة وثائق الإثبات.  
ع / الشؤون التصديقية للتصديقات



Bernard REGNAULD-FABRE  
Consul général de France  
au Caire