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EGYPT | Christian Convert Facing Maltreatment in Prison

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) received confirmed reports that Bishoy Armia Boulous, an Egyptian convert to Christianity who is currently serving a prison sentence, is being mistreated in prison.

Bishoy Armia Boulous, formerly known as Mohammed Hegazy, is being held in Tora Prison, Cairo. His lawyer informed CSW that Boulous is being held in solitary confinement in a cell designated for those awaiting capital punishment. Prison staff is abusing him verbally on account of his religion and are also abusing him physically; including breaking his glasses and making him walk barefoot to hearings in Minya Misdemeanour Court. There are unconfirmed reports that Boulous began a hunger strike in protest of his detention and maltreatment.

After originally being imprisoned in December 2013 on allegations of “sectarian strife,” Boulous was released then re-arrested on the same day in July 2014. He was working as a correspondent for El-Tarek TV, a Christian TV channel, when he was arrested, and his camera was confiscated. The arrest document from the Head of the Intelligence Police in Minya Province stated, “It came to our knowledge that a convert from Islam is photographing the demonstrations.” Boulous’ solicitor asserts that in reality these charges were precipitated by his client’s attempt in 2007 to change his religious designation in his national ID card.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “We continue to have serious concerns about the charges brought against Bishoy Armia Boulous, as well as the unacceptable mistreatment he is being subjected to in prison. Mr. Boulous was merely doing his job as a camera man when he was arrested. Moreover, the charge levelled against him lacks substance, adding credence to assertions that he is being mistreated because of his earlier attempts to seek official recognition of his conversion. The new Egyptian constitution states in Article 64 that freedom of belief is absolute, and in Article 9 the State undertakes to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens without discrimination. We call on the Egyptian Ministry of Justice to urgently investigate the mental and physical abuse Mr. Boulous is receiving in prison, to adhere to the constitution by dropping any charge he faces in connection with his religious status or conversion, and to release him.”