



BY AIRMAIL

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
CAIRO
EGYPT

Amsterdam, 26 March 2019

Per e-mail : p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

Subject: Arrest of lawyers Huda Abdel Moneim, Mohamed Abu Horira, Ezzat Ghoneim and Azzouz Maghoub.

Your Excellency,

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession.

Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned about the arrest and continues detention of lawyers Huda Abdel Moneim, Mohamed Abu Horira, Ezzat Ghoneim and Azzouz Maghoub.

According to public reports, members of the Nasr City Police Investigation Department and the National Security Agency have conducted a mass arrest campaign, rounding up at least 40 human rights workers, lawyers, and political activists since late October 2018. Many of those arrested were people who provided humanitarian and legal support to families of political detainees. Among those arrested are lawyers Huda Abdel Moneim and Mohamed Abu Horira.

It was reported that Huda Abdel Moneim former member of the National Council for Human Rights in Egypt, was arrested on 1 November at her home in Nasr City, in east Cairo. Her house was violently searched. Mohamed Abu Horira was equally arrested on 1 November 2018. Horira is a lawyer and former spokesperson of the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), a prominent human rights organization that provides legal aid and documents, amongst other issues, enforced disappearances and the expanding use of the death penalty.

On 21 November, Abdel Moneim and Horira were interrogated by the State Security Prosecution, who ordered them to be held in pre-trial detention for fifteen (15) days. According to our information, both were charged with joining and funding a terrorist organization and incitement to harm the national economy under Egypt's Counter-Terrorism Law No. 94/2015 (Case No. 1552/2018). On 15 January 2019, Abdel Moneim appeared before the prosecution for investigation, and her pre-trial detention was renewed for 15 days. Ms. Abdel Moneim reportedly told her daughter that she is being detained in an undisclosed location. No information is known to us regarding the whereabouts of Horira.

Furthermore, lawyers Ezzat Ghoneim, executive director of the ECRF, and Azzouz Maghoub, member and co-founder of the ECRF, were arrested in March 2018. The Giza criminal court ordered their release on 4 September



2018 (Supreme State Security case 441/2018). According to our information, however, security forces ignored the court order and forcibly disappeared Maghoub and Ghoneim from prison. On 20 October, arrest orders were issued for Maghoub and Ghoneim, after they failed to show up at the police station tasked with implementing the conditions of their release.

At the time of writing this letter, the whereabouts of Maghoub still remain unknown. Ghoneim recently surfaced again on February 9, five months after his disappearance, when he appeared at a hearing of the Cairo Criminal Court. Ghoneim declared that he had not violated his probation terms, but that he was not able to fulfill them due to his detention. A judge ordered the pre-trial detention of human rights defender and lawyer Ghoniem for 45 days pending investigation.

Lawyers for Lawyers – as well as various other organizations - fear that the arrests of Huda Abdel Moneim, Mohamed Abu Horira, Azzouz Mahgoub and Ezzat Ghoneim might be connected to, and could serve to curb their legitimate activities as attorneys.

Further, Lawyers for Lawyers believes that these incidents are part of a wider crackdown against human rights defenders and independent civil society organized by the Egyptian government. Whilst civil society, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and independent unions are the cornerstone of the rule of law in a democracy, the Egyptian government is heavily shutting down civic space and systematically violating the rule of law on security and counter-terrorism grounds.

In this context, we draw your attention to the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers¹ (Basic Principles), more in particular Principles 16 and 23, which read:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

23. Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession.

These principles are universally applicable. Therefore, your government is under an obligation to adequately protect and support its lawyers.

Further, as a member of the African Union and the UN, and as a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Egypt has legal obligations to adopt measures that effectively ensure rights to liberty, freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom of expression, and

¹The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provide a concise description of international norms relating to the key aspects of the right to independent counsel. The Basic Principles were unanimously adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in Havana, Cuba on September 7 1990. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly "welcomed" the Basic Principles in their 'Human rights in the administration of justice' resolution, which was adopted without a vote on December 18 1990 in both the session of the Third Committee and the plenary session of the General Assembly



fair trial. Also as a member of the United Nations, Egypt is expected to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the various principles, guidelines, standards and recommendations adopted by the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies relating to these rights.

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Huda Abdel Moneim, Mohamed Abu Horira, Ezzat Ghoneim and Azzouz Mahgoub and put an end to all acts of harassment against them, including at the judicial level;
- Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Huda Abdel Moneim, Mohamed Abu Horira, Ezzat Ghoneim and Azzouz Mahgoub;
- Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights lawyers in Egypt are able to carry out their legitimate professional rights and duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident that the government of Egypt will give this case the attention it deserves and we will continue to monitor this case closely.

Yours sincerely,

LAWYERS FOR LAWYERS (L4L)



Judith Lichtenberg, Executive Director