

BY AIRMAIL/EMAIL

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

Amsterdam, 11 April 2022

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

Subject: arrest and detention of human rights lawyer Youssef Mansour

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 has Special Consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 2013.

We wish to express our serious concern over the arbitrary arrest, subsequent disappearance and ongoing detention of human rights lawyer Youssef Mansour. Mr Mansour is a former lawyer at the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) who also worked on cases related to the 20 September protests in 2020.

According to the information we received, on 24 March 2022, Mr Mansour was arrested at his domicile by a group of officers from the National Security Forces, who reportedly failed to present an arrest warrant. The mobile phone and laptop of Mr Mansour were seized by the officers. We understand that, prior to his arrest, Mr Mansour wrote a post on social media denouncing the detention conditions in the Tora Maximum Security Prison.

Mr Mansour was disappeared in an undisclosed location for two days and was not presented before any investigative body until 26 March 2022, where he appeared before the Supreme State Security Persecution (SSSP) in Cairo. The SSSP ordered the pre-trial detention of Mr Mansour for a period of fifteen days in Albssaten Police station. Mr Mansour is detained in relation to case no. 330/2022 and accused of 'joining an illegal group', 'inciting the commission of terrorist crimes' and 'publishing false news inside and outside Egypt'.

Lawyers for Lawyers fears that the arrest and detention of Mr Mansour is aimed to curb his legitimate activities as an attorney.

In view of the above, we draw your attention to the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers¹, particularly Principle 16 and 23, which state:

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.

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

1. Release Youssef Mansour and drop all charges against him unless credible evidence is presented in proceedings that respect fair trial guarantees, and put an end to all acts of harassment against Youssef Mansour, including at the judicial level;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all 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.

We thank you for your attention and consideration to this very important matter. We hope that the government of Egypt will give this case the attention it deserves. We will continue to monitor this case closely.

Yours sincerely,

Lawyers for Lawyers

¹ The 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 7 September 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 18 December 1990 in both the session of the Third Committee and the plenary session of the General Assembly.