



**BY AIRMAIL**

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt,  
H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi,  
Abedine Palace  
CAIRO, **EGYPT**

Fax: +202 23901998

Amsterdam, 12 May 2015

Subject: Ongoing campaign of repression against human rights lawyers

Your Excellency,

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political Dutch 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 widespread and sustained campaign targeting hundreds of lawyers since 2013, including those defending political opponents of the regime and human rights activists, as well as lawyers exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

We were informed about the deaths of two lawyers, Imam Afifi and Karim Hamdi, the arrest and prosecution of lawyer Azza Soliman and the sentencing of lawyer Mahinour el-Massry.

According to our information, on 9 February 2015, El Raml Misdemeanour Court in Alexandria sentenced lawyer Mahienour El-Massry to two years' imprisonment. The sentence could be suspended upon payment of a 5,000 Egyptian Pounds fine (approximately €580). Mahinour el-Massry paid the fine. El-Massry was referred to court on charges of "assaulting security forces" after, in March 2012, she and other lawyers went to Raml police station to provide legal assistance to three activists who were arrested and sent to the police by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (the "Raml police station" case).

On 11 May 2015, El Raml Misdemeanor Court of Appeal in Alexandria governorate heard the appeal of El-Massry. The Court ordered the preventive detention of Mahienour El-Massry. The Court excluded relatives, friends of the defendants, and journalists from attending the session. The trial was adjourned to 31 May.

On 10 April, Imam Afifi, a 63-year old lawyer, was assaulted and arrested in the Mataria neighbourhood where a demonstration was taking place against the government. He was detained in Mataria police station where he was allegedly subjected to torture, including a



severe beating to his head. On 11 April, he was transferred from the police station to Mataria hospital. He died in hospital on 22 April.

On 22 February lawyer Karim Hamdi was arrested and questioned on suspicion of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, membership of which has been outlawed, and participating in an unauthorized demonstration against the government. While in police custody in Mataria police station, he was reportedly severely beaten on his neck, chest and abdomen. He died two days later after being transferred to hospital.

Furthermore, on 24 January 2015, human rights lawyer Azza Soliman voluntarily went to the Public Prosecution's office to give her testimony regarding the violent dispersal of a protest organized by the political party Popular Alliance on the same day by security forces, which led to the death of one political activist. Soliman did not take part in the protest, but was coincidentally in the same area and witnessed the dispersal and the shooting of the activist. On March 23, 2015 Egyptian prosecutors decided that Azza Soliman was no longer a witness in the case but a defendant. She is accused of protesting illegally and of breaching public order and security.

Lawyers for Lawyers – as well as various other organizations - fear that the deaths of Imam Afifi and Karim Hamdi and the criminal charges against Azza Soliman and Mahinour el-Masry are part of an ongoing campaign of repression against human rights defenders, including lawyers, in Egypt.

As a member of the United Nations Assembly, Egypt is bound by the UN Basic Principles of the Role of Lawyers adopted by the Assembly in 1990. We would draw your attention to Articles 16 and 18 of the Principles in particular which state that:

*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.*

*18. Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.*

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

- Ensure a prompt, impartial and effective investigation into the deaths of two lawyers, Imam Afifi and Karim Hamdi,
- Drop all charges against Ms. Azza Soliman and put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Azza Soliman and Mahinour el-Masry;



- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all human rights lawyers
- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Egypt.

We thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident of your good will and sense of justice and will continue to monitor this case closely.

On behalf of the President of Lawyers for Lawyers, Phon van den Biesen,

Yours sincerely

LAWYERS FOR LAWYERS

Adrie van de Streek  
Executive director