

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED RIGHTS LAWYER DENIED PRISON VISITS

Officials at the al-Qanater Women's Prison have denied Hoda Abdelmoniem, a 61-year-old human rights lawyer, a single prison visit or other contact with her family since her detention on 1 November 2018. Her relatives last saw her briefly at a court hearing on 18 July 2020.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi

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Dear Counsellor,

Hoda Abdelmoniem, a 61-year-old lawyer, has been arbitrarily detained since 1 November 2018 pending investigations into unfounded "terrorism"-related charges. Amnesty International believes she is held solely due to her human rights work. She is held at the al-Qanater Women's Prison and has been denied a single visit from her family and lawyers since her arrest. Prison officials have not provided them with any reason for denying visits.

On 15 March 2020, Egypt suspended all court proceedings as a measure to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Before the suspension, Hoda Abdelmoniem's family saw her briefly during a court session on 3 February 2020. Her daughter told Amnesty International that Hoda Abdelmoniem seemed particularly unwell, noting that she had suffered a heart attack on 26 January 2020 leading to her hospitalization. Even though court hearings have resumed on 1 May 2020, Hoda Abdelmoniem has not been transferred to court until 18 July 2020, where her husband was able to speak with her for few minutes.

Hoda Abdelmoniem's family members were also prevented from receiving any written information on her medical situation adding to their distress. Her daughter told Amnesty International that staff at the hospital, where she was treated for the heart attack, told her that the police took all her medical records. Hoda Abdelmoniem also suffers from high blood pressure and has sustained a clot in her left leg.

As you will be aware, on 10 March 2020, the Egyptian authorities suspended all prison visits citing COVID-19 fears. The Ministry of Interior announced on 15 August 2020 the resumption of prison visits on 22 August, with some restrictions in place. Amnesty International fears that Hoda Abdelmoniem might be excluded from the resumption of visits given the prison authorities' previous denials. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, prison authorities have not allowed Hoda Abdelmoniem's relatives to exchange letters with her, while other prisoners held in al-Qanater Women's Prison were able to send and receive letters.

We urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Hoda Abdelmoniem and drop all charges against her. Pending her release, we also call on you to ensure that Hoda Abdelmoniem has regular access to adequate health care and access to her medical records and that she is allowed immediate access to her family and lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 November 2018, National Security Agency forces (NSA) broke into the house of Hoda Abdelmoniem in Cairo at 1:30 am, ransacked it, and took her blindfolded to her mother's house. While the NSA forces searched her mother's house, she was left blindfolded in a police vehicle. The officers confirmed to her daughter, who was present during the arrest, that they belonged to the NSA, but did not present an arrest warrant, mention the reason for her arrest or clarify where she was being taken. Hoda Abdelmoniem was not allowed to take any medicine or personal belongings with her.

After nearly three weeks of being subjected to enforced disappearance, she was brought to the State Supreme Security Prosecution (SSSP), a special branch of the prosecution responsible for investigating national security threats, on 21 November 2018. On the following day, 22 November, her relatives were able to see her at the SSSP office. They reported that she was wearing the same clothes she wore on the day of her arrest, appeared to be terrified, and refused to talk about her detention. She was then taken back to an undisclosed location. Her family briefly saw her again on 24 and 28 November 2018 at the SSSP office. She was subjected to enforced disappearance again between 2 December 2018 and 14 January 2019, as authorities refused to disclose her whereabouts to her relatives and lawyers.

On 15 January 2019, she appeared in front of SSSP prosecutors, who renewed her detention for 15 days. She told her daughter that she did not know where she was being detained. At the time, her daughter reported that she lost a lot of weight, apparently due to the insufficient and poor quality of food. Following her questioning by the SSSP, NSA forces took her blindfolded to an unknown location. After another two weeks of being subjected to enforced disappearance, she was transferred to al-Qanater Women's Prison on 31 January 2019.

On the day of Hoda Abdelmoniem's arrest, 1 November 2018, the Egyptian authorities launched a series of raids, arresting at least 31 human rights defenders and lawyers; 10 women and 21 men. The Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), which documents enforced disappearances and the use of the death penalty, and provides legal aid to victims of human rights violations, was particularly targeted by the crackdown. In a statement published on 1 November 2018 announcing the suspension of its human rights work, ECRF cited the situation in Egypt as incompatible with human rights work and demanded the UN Human Rights Council to intervene.

Hoda Abdelmoniem volunteered as a consultant for the ECRF and had been active in documenting human rights violations including cases of enforced disappearances. She is a former member of the National Council for Human Rights and of the Egyptian Bar Association. Hoda Abdelmoniem had been banned from travelling outside of Egypt since late 2013 without being charged with any offence.

From May 2020, Egyptian courts and prosecutions had extended detention orders for thousands of pre-trial detainees without their presence in flagrant violation of their due process rights, including the right to challenge the legality of their detention. While some defendants have been transferred to courts for their hearings since mid-July, others have not been taken to court since the resumption of court hearings on 1 May 2020. According to lawyers, judges also refused to hear their defence including concerns over the illegality of the renewal decisions in light of Egyptian law. During one of the hearings, a judge asked lawyers to nominate five among themselves to represent hundreds of defendants.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 5 October 2020.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Hoda Abdelmoniem (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1297052019ENGLISH.pdf