

# URGENT ACTION

## LOSS OF CONTACT WITH DETAINED JOURNALIST

On 12 April 2020, Al-Qanater prison authorities started allowing most inmates to receive clothes, food, sanitizers, letters and a hot meal from their relatives weekly, after suspending prison visits in March. However, arbitrarily detained journalist, Solafa Magdy, was not allowed to receive packages from her family until 29 April. Her family has still not received any calls or letters from her raising fears about her safety amid a potential outbreak of COVID-19 in prison.

**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,

On 10 March 2020, the Egyptian authorities suspended all prison visits as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The authorities failed to introduce regular alternative means of communications between detainees and their families and lawyers such as bi-monthly phone calls like prescribed by Egyptian law.

On 16 April 2020, Al-Qanater women's prison authorities prevented Solafa Magdy's mother from sending her money, food and sanitizers while most other inmates have been allowed to receive such items since 12 April. Some, but not all inmates, have been able to send and receive written correspondence.

Solafa's family was concerned that Solafa was facing disciplinary measures, as prison authorities prevent detainees held in disciplinary cells from receiving visits and packages from their families. On 29 April 2020, her family was finally allowed to send her food and cleaning products but remain concerned about her safety as they have received no letters from her.

Journalists Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah, detained at Tora Investigations prison, have been receiving essential items sent by their families weekly since 12 April. They were also able to receive but not send letters.

Amnesty International considers Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed to be prisoners of conscience detained solely for carrying out their legitimate work as journalists and for defending victims of human rights violations.

**I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed. I call on you to also ensure that - pending their release – they are provided with means to regularly communicate with their families and lawyers. I finally urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained solely for carrying out their journalistic work and for peacefully expressing their opinions and take measures to protect the health of all prisoners amid the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah are freelance journalists working for different media outlets. Solafa and Hossam are married and have a seven-year-old son. Amnesty International believes that their detention is solely based on their writings and social media activism defending prisoners of conscience and victims of human rights violations, including their friend [Esraa Abdelfattah](#), a journalist and activist, who is also in detention.

Solafa Magdy and Mohamed Salah are facing trumped-up charges of “joining a terrorist group” and “spreading false news”, while Hossam el-Sayed is accused of “membership in a terrorist group” as part of case 488 of 2019, which relates to the March 2019 anti-government protests. They have been detained since 26 November 2019. Since 15 March 2020, the Egyptian ministry of justice suspended all hearings before courts as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, detainees, including Solafa, Mohamed and Hossam, are not being transferred to court sessions or detention renewal hearings.

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power, the authorities have arbitrarily blocked hundreds of websites news websites, raided and/or closed the offices of at least nine media outlets and arbitrarily detained scores of journalists. The organization is aware of at least 37 journalists detained at the time of writing solely for carrying-out their legitimate work or for expressing opinions on their personal social media platforms. Among them, at least 20 journalists are detained solely in connection to their work, including conducting investigations, publishing stories or covering anti-government protests.

The arrest of Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed come in the context of the post-September 2019 protest crackdown, the largest on dissenting voices since 2014, and two days after the raid of independent media website Mada Masr.

On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke across Egyptian cities, calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. The protests have been triggered by social media videos of Mohamed Ali, a former army contractor, who has accused army leaders and the president of wasting public money on building luxury properties. Amnesty International has [documented](#) how Egyptian security forces carried-out sweeping arrests of peaceful protesters, journalists, human rights lawyers, activists and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests. According to Egyptian human rights lawyers, the authorities have arrested at least 4,000 individuals in relation to their perceived participation or support of the protests. The authorities ordered the pre-trial detention of at least 3,715 people pending investigations on “terrorism”-related charges in the largest single protests-related criminal investigation in Egypt’s history.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 27 July 2020**

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** **Solafa Magdy** (she/her), **Hossam el-Sayed** (he/him), and **Mohamed Salah** (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/1602/2019/en/>