

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S ASSETS FROZEN

An Egyptian court has summarily frozen the assets of human rights defender Azza Soliman and may freeze the assets of three others.

On 14 December, a court in Cairo upheld an asset freeze against the personal assets of women's human rights defender **Azza Soliman** as well as those of her human rights firm, Lawyers for Justice and Peace. The ruling confirmed a de-facto freeze already in place since mid-November without a court decision.

The court has set 11 January to rule on whether to freeze the assets of **Mozn Hassan** of Nazra for Feminist Studies director, as well as those of **Mohamed Zaree** and **Atef Hafez** of the Arab Penal Reform Organization.

On 12 December, the judge hearing the case rejected requests by Azza Soliman's defence counsel to present her financial and tax records, as well as to review records of her interrogation by an investigating judge on 7 December, according to Azza Soliman's representatives and the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, which she directs.

The asset freezes have been ordered by judges overseeing a criminal investigation into the activities and funding of Egyptian human rights organizations, in a case officially known as Case 173 of 2011.

This year, the judges have frozen the assets of seven human rights defenders and at least 12 human rights defenders have been barred from travelling abroad. The moves have raised fears that the authorities are preparing to put human rights defenders on trial on charges such as operating unregistered organizations, accepting funding without government permission and damaging Egypt's "national interests" – an offence which carries a 25-year prison sentence. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is also expected to sign a bill to replace the existing associations law. If passed, it would force human rights groups to seek official approval to conduct field research, publish their findings and seek funding.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on Egypt's authorities to close the politically motivated Case 173 of 2011 and end the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, including through arbitrary arrests, interrogations, travel bans, asset freeze and closure orders, and trumped-up charges;
- Calling on Egypt's authorities to ensure that the asset freezes imposed on human rights defenders and organizations, in relation to Case 173 of 2011, are immediately lifted;
- Calling on them to reject the new NGO bill, because it contravenes Egypt's 2014 constitution, as well as international law and standards on the right to freedom of association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JANUARY 2017 TO:

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2391 1441
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Social Solidarity

Ghada Waly
Ministry of Social Solidarity
19 Maragahi Street, Agouza
Giza, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 3337 5390
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights
Laila Bahaa El Din
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2576 7967
Email: Contact.Us@mfa.gov.org
Twitter: @MfaEgypt

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the seventh update of UA 81/16. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/5305/2016/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 7 December, security forces arrested Azza Soliman at her home and brought her before one of the judges investigating Case 173 of 2011. The judge interrogated her for approximately three hours over charges that included receiving funds from abroad with the intention of harming Egypt, tax evasion and establishing an entity which carries out the activities of an association. The judge ordered her release on bail of 20,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$ 1,093).

The arrest of Azza Soliman and the freezing of her assets are an escalation in the authorities' moves against Egyptian human rights organizations. On 15 June, a court froze the assets of Al-Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies and its director, Ahmed Samih. On 17 September, a court upheld an asset freeze ordered by an investigating judge against five human rights defenders: Hossam Bahgat, an investigative journalist and founder of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights; Gamal Eid, director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information; Bahey el-Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies; Mostafa al-Hassan, director of the Hisham Mubarak Law Center; and Abdel Hafez Tayel, director of the Egyptian Center for the Right to Education. The court also froze the assets of three of the organizations: the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and the Egyptian Center for the Right to Education.

At least 12 human rights defenders and NGO staff have been prevented from travelling abroad in 2016. They are: Gamal Eid and Hossam Bahgat, in February; Mohamed Zaree of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (sic), in May; Hoda Abd el-Wahab of the Arab Centre for Independence of Judges and the Legal Profession and Mozn Hassan, in June; Nasser Amin of the Arab Centre for Independence of Judges and the Legal Profession and Reda El Danbouki of the Women's Center for Guidance and Legal Awareness, in July; and Malek Adly of the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Ahmed Ragheb of the National Community for Human Rights and Law, Azza Soliman, Aida Seif El Dawla of Al Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Abdel-Hafez Tayel, in November. Individuals banned from travel in previous years in connection with their human rights work include Mohamed Lotfy of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms and staff at the Egyptian Democracy Academy.

In February, the government ordered the closure of Al Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, a clinic which cares for survivors of torture and other ill-treatment. The organization has continued to operate and challenged the government's decision before the courts. The authorities briefly froze its assets in November, but lifted the freeze when the organization proved that it has operated as a registered clinic with the Ministry of Health and does not need to be registered under the existing associations law (Law 84 of 2002). The escalating moves raise fears that the prosecution of Egyptian human rights defenders is imminent. They may face up to 25 years in prison and a fine of LE500,000 (US\$ 27,528) if convicted of the charge of receiving foreign funding to damage Egypt's "national interests", "peace", "unity" or "security", under Article 78 of the Penal Code.

The right to freedom of association is established under Article 75 of Egypt's constitution and Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Egypt is a state party. Freedom of movement is also guaranteed under Article 62 of the Constitution and Article 12 of the ICCPR.

Name: Azza Soliman (f), Hossam Bahgat (m), Gamal Eid (m), Bahey el-Din Hassan (m), Mostafa al-Hassan (m), Abdel Hafez Tayel (m), Mozn Hassan (f), Hoda Abd el-Wahab (f), Mohamed Zaree (m), Ahmed Samih (m), Malek Adly (m), Ahmed Ragheb (m), Aida Seif El Dawla (f), Mozn Hassan (f), Mohamed Zaree (m), Mohamed Zaree (m, sic), Atef Hafez (m), Nasser Amin (m), Hoda Abd el-Wahab (f), Mohamed Lotfy (m), and many other human rights defenders.

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 81/16 Index: MDE 12/5365/2016 Issue Date: 16 December 2016