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AI – Amnesty International

Egypt: Chilling wave of arbitrary arrests as authorities intensify crackdown on critics and opponents

The Egyptian authorities have in the last 48 hours arbitrarily arrested at least eight individuals including a former member of parliament, opposition party leaders, journalists and activists in an escalating crackdown on opposition and civil society in the country, Amnesty International said.

Amongst those arrested by security forces in early morning raids was Zyad El-Eleaimy a former member of parliament and leading figure in the Egyptian Social Democratic party.

“The latest wave of arrests targeting critics, opposition leaders, activists and journalists under the guise of counterterrorism is part of the Egyptian authorities’ systematic persecution and brutal crackdown on anyone who dares to criticize them. The crackdown leaves no doubt about the authorities’ vision for political life in Egypt; an open-air prison with no opposition, critics or independent reporting allowed,” said Magdalena Mughrabi, Amnesty International’s North Africa Director of Research.

“We call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release those detained, as their detention is solely based on the peaceful exercise of their human rights. In the meantime, the Egyptian government must ensure that those arrested are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and must allow them access to lawyers, as well as contact with their families.”

The Ministry of Interior issued a press release (<https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=25062019&id=5d581426-eb5c-459-9580-dbb96666c204>) today stating that it has arrested seven individuals in relation to “Hope Plan”, which it described as a “joint plot between the Muslim Brotherhood’s exiled leadership and the civil opposition [in Egypt] to target the state and its institutions in order to oust it on 30 June.” The statement refers to the involvement of a number of Muslim Brotherhood and opposition figures abroad, as well as the arrest of an unspecified number of individuals inside Egypt, including eight mentioned by name.

These arrests comes amid a renewed crackdown on human rights and activists. In May, Amnesty International had warned of an upcoming wave (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/05/egypt-arrests-raise-fears-of-fresh-crackdown-against-peaceful-critics/>) of arrests, following the arrest of labour rights lawyer Haytham Mohamdeen, and former political activist Mostafa Maher

(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/05/egypt-arrests-raise-fears-of-fresh-crackdown-against-peaceful-critics/>). The authorities also arrested land rights researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Ibrahim Ezz-Eldin on 11 June and have since subjected him to enforced disappearance. A day later, on 12 June, human rights lawyer Amr Nohan was detained from a police station in Alexandria and charged with “membership in a terrorist group”.

Amnesty International was able to independently confirm the arrest of Zyad El-Eleaimy; Hossam Moa'ans, a journalist and spokesperson for an opposition party, the Popular Current; Hisham Fouad, a journalist and labour rights' activist; Hassan al-Barbary, an accountant and a labor rights advocate; Omar el-Shenety, an economist and university professor, and Ahmed el-Akabawy, one of the founders and leaders of the Istiqlal party.

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ecoi.net summary:

At least 8 individuals arrested within 48 hours; the arrestees are former members of parliament, opposition party leaders, journalists and activists



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