

Document #2056402

## OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### Egypt: Human rights defenders held incommunicado, face spurious charges, says UN expert

GENEVA (15 July 2021) – A UN expert today expressed dismay at the continued widespread arrest and extended pre-trial detention of human rights defenders in Egypt, saying activists have been detained without warrants, held incommunicado and then accused of multiple spurious offences.

“Exercising one’s right to freedom of expression, association or peaceful assembly is not a crime. Everyone has the right to promote and protect human rights. There is no justification for the actions being taken against human rights defenders by the Egypt authorities,” said Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

This is the second time this year that Lawlor has addressed the targeting of human rights defenders in Egypt.

“In January 2021, I expressed my dismay at the misuse of anti-terrorism and national security laws to criminalise the work of human rights defenders in the country. Since then, more defenders have been placed in pre-trial detention under investigation for crimes under these provisions, which carry aggravated sentences. Many of those who were detained continue to be held in deplorable conditions in prison with seriously negative impacts on their physical and mental health.”

Lawlor highlighted a common trend across multiple cases she recently raised with the Egyptian Government, whereby human rights defenders are often arrested without a warrant and detained incommunicado at an unknown location and subjected to enforced disappearance, before being presented before the Supreme State Security Prosecution. Their pre-trial detention pending investigation is then ordered for alleged acts criminalized under the vague provisions of the Penal Code, Anti-Terror Law and Anti-Cybercrime Law.

“While initially placed in pre-trial detention for periods of 15 days, human rights defenders routinely see their detention renewed thereafter, with these periods of detention without trial commonly stretching to two years.”

During this period, Lawlor stressed human rights defenders are at high risk of being attached to new cases for alleged crimes under the same legislation, a practice particularly common in instances where human rights defenders have seen their release ordered by courts.

“This practice of attaching human rights defenders to multiple spurious cases, in some instances in parallel, represents the flagrant disregard by Egypt of the international human rights obligations it has signed up to. It is a practice designed to prevent defenders from promoting human rights in the country and it spreads a chilling effect among civil society.

“I urge the Egyptian authorities to re-think their approach to human rights defenders and to take steps to ensure the national framework of criminal and anti-terrorism provisions is not employed to target them.”

Lawlor stressed the vital role civil society plays in Egypt and ensured that she will continue to follow up on cases of detained human rights defenders brought to her attention, and called for the immediate release of the following individuals:

- Mr. Mohamed Ramadan, human rights defender and lawyer
- Mr. Mohamed El-Baqer, human rights defender and lawyer
- Mr. Ezzat Ghoneim, human rights defender and lawyer, director of Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
- Ms. Aisha El Shatr, human rights defender and ECRF board member
- Mr. Mohamed Abo Horira, human rights defender and ECRF board member
- Ms. Hoda Abdel Moneim, human rights defender and ECRF board member
- Mr. Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, human rights defender and researcher
- Mr. Ramy Kamel Saied Salib, human rights defender and head of Maspero Youth Foundation

- Ms. Mahienour El-Masry, human rights defender and lawyer
- Mr. Amr Imam, human rights defender and lawyer at the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
- Mr. Walid Ali Saleim Mohammed Hamada, human rights defender and lawyer

Finally, Lawlor highlighted the vital role that civil society plays and how the Egyptian authorities must ensure an open, secure and safe environment that is free from all acts of intimidation, harassment and reprisals.

*The expert's call is endorsed by: Mr. Diego García-Sayán, [Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#); Mr. Tae-Ung Baik (Chair), Mr. Henrikas Mickevičius, (Vice Chair), Ms. Aua Balde, Mr. Bernard Duhaime and Mr. Luciano Hazan, [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#); Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, [Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health](#).*

ENDS

*Ms Mary Lawlor, (Ireland) is the [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#). She is currently an Adjunct Professor of Business and Human Rights in Trinity College Dublin. She was the founder of Front Line Defenders - the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. As Executive Director from 2001-2016, she represented Front Line Defenders and had a key role in its development. Ms. Lawlor was previously Director of the Irish Office of Amnesty International from 1988 to 2000, after becoming a member of the Board of Directors in 1975 and being elected its President from 1983 to 1987.*

*Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

**ecoi.net summary:**

UN experts dismayed at continued arrest and extended pre-trial detention of human rights defenders

**Country:**

Egypt

**Source:**

[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

**Original link:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27314&LangID=E>

**Document type:**

Appeal or News Release

**Language:**

English

**Published:**

15 July 2021

**Document ID:**

2056402

---

Austrian Red Cross  
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum  
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien  
[T \(Telefon\)](tel:+43158900583) +43 1 589 00 583  
[F \(Fax\)](tel:+43158900589) +43 1 589 00 589  
[info@ecoi.net](mailto:info@ecoi.net)

Contact  
Imprint & Disclaimer  
F.A.Q.  
Data Protection Notice

---

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

