



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

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Paris, April 10, 2020

H.E. Mr. Abdel Fattah El Sisi

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Office of the President

Al Ittihadia Palace

Cairo - Arab Republic of Egypt

Transmission by email and fax: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

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Excellency,

RE: Release of lawyers, including Mahienour El-Massry during Covid-19 Pandemic

I am writing to you in my capacity as Director General of the Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL). The mission of the UIA-IROL is to promote the Rule of Law, address essential human rights issues, and is particularly concerned with defending members of the legal profession and promoting the profession's fundamental principles in defense of human rights.

As you will recall, the UIA-IROL has had the opportunity to express our concern and seek your intervention concerning the continued detention of our colleague, Mahienour El-Massry, who was the recipient of the 2014 Ludovic Trarieux Award for her contribution to the defense of human rights.

We are currently in an extraordinary time in history. The World Health Organisation has declared the Corona virus as a pandemic. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged governments to prevent catastrophic rates of COVID-19 infection in prison populations, and to release "every person detained without sufficient legal basis, including political prisoners, and those detained for critical, dissenting views." In this context, the UNHCHR office also has reported that, to date, there has not been a release of prisoners included in the measures taken in Egypt to counter the pandemic.

Notwithstanding the above, on March 27, 2019, during the state of lockdown in Egypt, yet another lawyer, Mohsen Bahnasi, was arrested and placed in detention.

These are matters of extreme urgency. Currently, no Egyptian prisoners are allowed any visitors. It is unclear whether those with health conditions are receiving medical assistance. Families bringing medicines to prisoners have been unable to verify whether those medicines are being received. Despite regulations that allow it, those in detention are not permitted to contact anyone through telephone or other electronic medium. These limitations significantly jeopardize prisoners' rights to fair treatment and due process.

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We strongly renew the concerns UIA-IROL communicated earlier, regarding the continued detention of Ms. El-Massry and other colleagues illegally detained for performing their professional legal duties and/or for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association. Further, given the extraordinary situation, we urge, at the very minimum, that those detained and in detention pending trial, be released to ensure that their right to life and right to health are respected.

Thank you for your urgent consideration.

Respectfully yours,



Jacqueline R. SCOTT
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