



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

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## STATEMENT

Paris, 18 December 2024

### **UIA-IROL Expresses its Support for Egyptian Lawyer Hoda Abdel-Moneim**

**UIA-IROL expresses its deep concern about the critical situation of Ms Hoda Abdel-Moneim, an Egyptian lawyer and human rights defender, who has been arbitrarily detained for more than six years. UIA-IROL considers that her detention is part of a more general practice and pattern of repeated and systematic attacks on the independence, freedom and security of dozens of legal professionals in Egypt.**

Ms Abdel-Moneim was arrested on 1 November 2018 and held at an undisclosed location for at least 20 days. Following proceedings marked by numerous legal violations, on 5 March 2023, the Emergency State Security Court (ESSC) sentenced Ms Abdel-Moneim to five years in prison, starting on the day of her arrest, on the charge of joining an unspecified terrorist organization (Case No. 1552/2018). On 31 October 2023, *i.e.*, the last day of Abdel-Moneim's sentence, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) ordered pretrial detention pending investigation on similar charges in a separate case (No. 730/2020)<sup>1</sup>, in the practice commonly known as "rotation". If convicted, she is now facing life in prison. Moreover, according to reports, on 10 December 2024, Hoda Abdel-Moneim was referred to trial by the State Security Prosecution for the third time on similar charges (Case No. 800/2019), still without concrete evidence.<sup>2</sup>

It is our understanding that since her arrest, visits from her relatives and lawyers have been sporadically restricted and she has lacked adequate access to medical care, despite the fact that, as has been reported, she appears to be suffering from severe and chronic conditions.

Hoda Abdel-Moneim is a 65-year-old lawyer who has been active in the defense of human rights since 1983, particularly in cases regarding women's and children's rights, and she is a former member of Egypt's National Council for Human Rights. Ms Abdel-Moneim and six other detained Egyptian lawyers received the [2020 Human Rights Award of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe](#), in recognition of their courage and commitment.

**UIA-IROL expresses its dismay at Ms Hoda Abdel-Moneim's continued arbitrary detention for more than six years. Furthermore, UIA-IROL is extremely concerned about reports that Ms Abdel-Moneim's health has deteriorated significantly throughout her detention and that she has not received access to full and adequate healthcare.**

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<sup>1</sup> See more detailed information in the joint communication sent by several UN Experts on 22 January 2024, [AL EGY 7/2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/12/human-rights-day-egyptian-rights-lawyer-hoda-abdel-moneim-referred-trial-second-time>

Since 2014, the human rights situation in Egypt has continuously deteriorated, and Egyptian civil society, including, particularly, human rights lawyers and defenders denouncing this deterioration, has been increasingly targeted in a climate of repression carried out under the guise of the fight against terrorism.

In this context, the practise of law in Egypt has been facing increasing difficulties, especially for lawyers defending minorities or those working on criminal or human rights-related cases. Defendants and their lawyers are systematically denied access to files. Their contact in conditions guaranteeing the confidentiality of lawyer-client communications -before and during interrogations - is also denied.

Further, as the crackdown against civil society, freedom of expression and peaceful protests has intensified, arrests and prosecutions of lawyers have increased notably in the government's attempt to dissuade lawyers from handling sensitive cases. According to the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, at the height of this crisis in November 2015, more than 200 lawyers were imprisoned.<sup>4</sup>

As in Hoda Abdel-Moneim's case, prosecutions are often based on vague and imprecise charges, with no disclosure of the evidence or the terrorist organizations allegedly involved.

UIA-IROL further deplores the systematic use of the practice of "rotation," which allows pre-trial detention to be extended indefinitely by reassigning detainees to new, similar cases.<sup>5</sup> It therefore joins the numerous international recognized opinions, including that of the Human Rights Committee<sup>6</sup>, which have repeatedly urged Egyptian authorities to put an end to this practice, in particular, against human rights defenders and lawyers as well as against those identified as dissenting voices.

In this regard, UIA-IROL recalls the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which provides that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention<sup>7</sup> and that all shall be equal before the courts and tribunals<sup>8</sup>.

More specifically, as regards lawyers, the [UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#) provides in Principle 16 that:

*"16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics."*

**UIA-IROL calls for the immediate release of Ms Hoda Abdel-Moneim and all Egyptian lawyers and human rights defenders who remain arbitrarily detained merely for performing their professional**

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<sup>4</sup> General Assembly, 22 April 2022, Protection of lawyers against undue interference in the free and independent exercise of the legal profession Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Diego García-Sayán, [A/HRC/50/36](#), §35

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, MENA Rights group, [The practice of "rotation": how Egypt keeps its dissidents in indefinite detention](#), December 14, 2021

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Egypt, 14 April 2023, [CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5](#), see para. 31 et, in particular 32 (b) which recommends that "the State party should (...) (b)ensure that statutory limits to the duration of pretrial detention are enforced, including by putting an end to the involvement of security agencies in the decision-making process on the release of detainees and the practice of "rotation" under which detainees are added to new cases on similar charges".

<sup>7</sup> See [ICCPR](#) Article 7

<sup>8</sup> *Idem* Article 14 \*

functions or legitimately exercising their human rights. Further, it urges Egyptian relevant authorities to put an end to all forms of harassment against them, including by dropping all abusive charges against them. Egyptian authorities must comply with their obligation to guarantee that lawyers are able to exercise their profession with complete independence and freedom from reprisals.

UIA-IROL will continue to monitor this situation closely and calls on the international legal community to remain vigilant and to mobilize in support of the Rule of Law, independence of the profession, and the protection of the fundamental rights of lawyers in Egypt.

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#### More about the UIA-IROL

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*The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.*

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