

Solidarity Egypt: Drop All Charges Against Azza Soliman, Remove the Travel Ban and Unfreeze her Accounts !

Saturday 24 December 2016, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 21 December 2016).

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Fax: +202 23901998

Prime Minister, Mr. Sherif Ismail. Email: primemin@idsc.gov.eg

Minister of the Interior, General Magdy Abdel Ghaffar. E-mail: moi1@idsc.gov.eg

Minister of Justice, Mr. Ahmed Al-Zanad. E-mail: mojeb@idsc.gov.eg

Public Prosecutor, Counsellor Nabeel Sadek, Fax: +202 2577 4716

President of the National Council For Human Rights, Mr. Mohamed Fayeq. Email: nchr@nchr.org.eg

H.E. Ms. Wafaa Bassim, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations in Geneva, Email: mission.egypt@ties.itu.int

Embassy of Egypt in Brussels. Email: embassy.egypt@skynet.be

Chairperson, National Council for Women, Egypt. Ms Maya Morsy. mayamorsy@gmail.com

Dear

Drop All Charges Against Azza Soliman, Remove the Travel Ban and Unfreeze her Accounts

We in the global civil society movement are extremely concerned over the arrest of our fellow activist in the women's rights movement, Ms Azza Soliman on 7 December 2016, following a travel ban and freezing of her personal and organisational accounts and assets on 17 November. No clarification was provided as to why the order had been issued.

We are concerned at the continued harassment perpetrated by the state authorities against a woman human rights defender since January 2015 when Ms Soliman was a witness to the murder of activist Shaimaa ElSabbagh, who was killed while peacefully protesting on 24 January. In March 2015, the Qasr El Nile Prosecution Office in Cairo changed Ms Soliman's status from being a witness to the killing of Shaimaa ElSabbagh to a defendant, accusing her of illegal protest. She was acquitted of the charges, which the prosecutor subsequently appealed. However, Ms Soliman's acquittal was upheld in October 2015.

Following the travel ban which Ms Soliman only discovered at the Cairo International Airport as she was about to fly to Jordan, she also discovered that both her personal and legal firm, Lawyers for Justice and Peace (LJP) bank accounts had been frozen by judicial order on the basis of her involvement in the 2011 foreign funding case, also known as Case No. 173. Since 2011, 37 Egyptian rights organisations have faced charges under this case, with some leaders and staff members of

human rights organizations charged with “receipt of illegal foreign funding” and “working without legal permission”. Five prominent human rights defenders and three leading human rights NGOs had their assets frozen as well. And in May 2016, five other human rights defenders were banned from travel in a wave of harassment against the Egyptian human rights movement.

This judicial harassment against Azza Soliman and other prominent human rights defenders and journalists come at a time when Egypt seems to be institutionalising its crackdown on human rights defenders. On 15 November, a highly restrictive draft NGO law was approved by the Egyptian parliament for review before the Egyptian Council. The proposed law threatens to imprison human rights defenders and NGO staff from one to five years and fine them between EGP50,000 and EGP1,000,000 if they inter alia facilitate or participate in activities carried out by international organisations without authorisation of the Egyptian authorities, or if they carry out field research and public polls in their capacity as civil society without prior consent. The proposed law would also grant Egyptian authorities control over the establishment of Egyptian NGOs and would also require international NGOs to register with the Egyptian authorities. The draft law also gives Egyptian authorities the power to dictate the location and headquarters of civil society operations, and proposes to imprison human rights defenders for up to one year and fine them between EGP20,000 and EGP500,000 for “offences” such as moving the headquarters of the organisation to a place other than what had been previously authorised. The proposed law also places individual liability on government officials who authorise the work of NGOs in contravention of the draft law.

We condemn the criminalisation of civil society in Egypt, including through the imposition of travel bans, the blocking of human rights organisations’ bank accounts and the freezing of their assets. We call for an immediate end to the persecution of human rights defenders, reiterating their essential role in the development of a just and equal society. We also demand that the new restrictive draft NGO law recently approved by Egyptian Parliament be withdrawn.

We urge the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Drop all charges against Azza Soliman, including case number 173 which is devoid of any legal ground for action. Drop all charges against all other human rights defenders, including journalists;
2. Immediately and unconditionally remove the travel ban imposed against Azza Soliman and all other human rights defenders facing travel restrictions in Egypt, and unfreeze their personal and organizational assets unconditionally;
3. Refrain from adopting the draft NGO law introduced on 14 November before the Egyptian Parliament as it would severely hamper the work of human rights organisations in Egypt; Any laws regulating NGOs must comply with Egyptian constitutional right to fundamental liberties and international human rights standards;
4. Cease targeting all human rights organisations and human rights defenders in Egypt and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Yours Sincerely,

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

P.S.

* SIAWI. Wednesday 21 December 2016:
<http://www.siawi.org/article13353.html>