

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER DETAINED

On 22 September 2019, security officers in plainclothes arrested prominent human rights lawyer and activist, Mahienour el-Masry and bundled her into a minivan, as she left the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) building in Alexandria. An SSSP prosecutor later questioned Mahienour el-Masry on unfounded charges including “aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals” and “spreading false news” in a case related to the March 2019 anti-government protests. The prosecutor then ordered her detention in Al Qanater women’s prison for 15 days, pending investigations.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Madinat al-Rehab
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2577 4716

Dear Counsellor,

On 22 September 2019 at around 7 pm, men in plain clothes arrested human rights lawyer **Mahienour el-Masry** at the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) building in Alexandria and bundled her into a minivan to an undisclosed location. She was at the SSSP to follow up on the investigations of those who have been arrested over protests that broke out on 20 and 21 September 2019, calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. On 23 September 2019, an SSSP prosecutor questioned Mahienour el-Masry, and decided to hold her for 15 days in Al Qanater women’s prison pending investigation on case 488 of 2019 which relates to the March 2019 anti-government protests. She faces charges of “collaborating with a terrorist organization to achieve its goals”, “spreading false news”, and “using social media to publish false rumours.”

Mahienour el-Masry’s detention comes amidst the biggest crackdown under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s rule. More than 2,300 people were arrested in connection with the 20-21 September 2019 protests calling on President al-Sisi to resign.

Amnesty International considers that Mahienour el-Masry is a human rights defender and prisoner of conscience who is detained solely for her peaceful work defending victims of human rights violations.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Mahienour el-Masry. I call on you to also ensure that - pending her release – she is granted access to her lawyers and family and that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment. I finally urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately release all those detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke out in different Egyptian cities calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. The protests are believed to have been sparked by corruption allegations shared by former army contractor Mohamad Ali who has accused army leaders and the president of wasting public money on building luxury properties. Amnesty International has directly documented the arrest of 76 individuals in relation to the protests between 20 and 29 September in six cities. Human rights lawyers working with organizations including the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) and Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) have documented at least [2,300 arrests](#) so far. According to lawyers, scores of detainees have been released without questioning, but many others continue to appear before prosecutors. The wave of arrests rounded up journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, protesters and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests from taking place. The government has also added the BBC and Al Hurra TV channels to the list of 513 other websites already blocked in Egypt and disrupted online messaging applications to thwart further protests.

Mahienour el-Masry is a prominent human rights lawyer in Alexandria, where she plays a leading role in defending the rights of workers, women and refugees. While in detention in 2014 for exercising her right to freedom of assembly, she was awarded the Ludovic Trarieux Human Rights Prize, given each year to a lawyer working in defence of human rights.

In February 2015, Mahienour el-Masry was sentenced to two years in prison. The sentence was reduced by the appeal court on 11 May 2015 to one year and three months. She was convicted of “protesting without authorization”, “damaging police property”, “attacking security forces”, and “threatening public security”; on the charges stemmed from her participation, on 29 March 2013, in a protest in front of al-Raml Police Station in Alexandria. The protest was in solidarity with lawyers who were detained and interrogated inside the police station and who had accused police officers of verbally and physically attacking them. On 13 August 2016, Mahienour el-Masry was released from jail after serving her prison term of one year and three months.

On 14 June 2016 Mahienour el-Masry, Moataseem Medhat and activists Asmaa Naeem, Walee el-Amry and Ziad Abu el-Fadl participated in a protest in Alexandria against the Egyptian government’s decision to hand over control of two islands, Tiran and Sanafir, to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On 18 November 2017, the Montazah Misdemeanour Court in Alexandria ordered the detention of Mahienour el-Masry and Moataseem Medhat until the verdict in December. On 30 December 2017, the same court sentenced both to two years in prison for “participating in an unauthorized protest” and “show of force”. The court also sentenced the three other activists to three years in prison, in absentia. On 13 January 2018, the Montazah Misdemeanour Court of Appeals acquitted Mahienour el-Masry and Moataseem Medhat of all charges.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 November 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Mahienour el-Masry (her/she)