Egypt | Six Years of Arbitrary Detention... Call for the Immediate Release of Hoda Abdelmonem and Dropping of Fabricated Charges

Joint Statements · Egypt · 31 October 2024

The “FreeHoda” campaign and the undersigned organisations condemn the continued arbitrary detention of lawyer and human rights defender Hoda Abdelmonem, who has been detained for six years. We denounce the re-fabrication of charges against her in a new case after she completed her previous sentence for similar accusations, and call for her immediate release due to her deteriorating health in detention.

As of October 31, six years have passed since the 2018 arbitrary detention of Hoda Abdelmonem; one year has passed since the October 31, 2023 end of her five-year sentence issued by the Emergency State Security Court, on fabricated charges in Case No. 1552 of 2018 in the Supreme State Security Court. The case, commonly known in the media as the “Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms” case, has been marred by numerous legal violations from the start and has been described by UN bodies as an unfair trial.

On the last day of her sentence, Hoda Abdelmonem was charged again (rotated) in a new case, facing the same charges of joining a terrorist group and financing terrorism, despite having previously been acquitted of some of these charges. Abdelmonem was shocked to find these charges brought against her yet again in a new case, No. 730 of 2020, instead of being released on October 31, 2023.

‘Rotation’ violates Egyptian law, which prohibits prosecuting an individual twice for the same charges, and contravenes the legal principle that a person cannot be tried and punished for the same charges they have previously faced, according to Article 101 of the Egyptian Evidence Law and Article 116 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

Lawyer and human rights defender Hoda Abdelmonem was arrested on November 1, 2018, and subjected to enforced disappearance for 21 days, during which she was denied contact with her lawyers or family. It was later revealed that she had been detained at a security facility in Abbasiya. Since her arrest, Abdelmonem’s family and lawyers have faced restrictions and repeated bans on visitation. The prison administration has also ignored defense requests to access her medical reports, despite her suffering from a blood clot in her left leg, kidney failure in the left kidney, reflux in the right kidney, a heart attack, and severe balance issues due to an inner ear infection. In August, Abdelmonem informed her family that she was diagnosed with diabetes at the prison hospital.

The continued detention of Abdelmonem for over a year after her sentence expired, along with the detention of Alaa Abdel Fattah despite the end of his sentence last September, constitute blatant violations of the rule of law in Egypt and reflect security apparatus interference in judicial affairs. These violations against human rights defenders coincide with the signing of a new strategic partnership between the European Union and Egypt in 2024, including pledges of substantial financial support, despite insufficient attention to the deteriorating human rights situation and increasing repression in Egypt. This appears to give the regime a green light to continue its crackdown on opponents.

In this context, the undersigned organisations call for the immediate and unconditional release of lawyer and human rights defender Hoda Abdelmonem and the dropping of the new charges, which are considered fabricated. They also call for the cessation of the additional penalties imposed in her first case, including her listing on terrorism watch lists and subjecting her to police surveillance for an additional five years, especially given her deteriorating health condition and in respect of Egyptian law principles.

Hoda Abdelmonem, a 65-year-old lawyer and human rights defender, was awarded the 2020 Human Rights Award by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe. She has been active in human rights defense and law practice since 1983 and is also a former member of Egypt's National Council for Human Rights, as well as a former legal advisor to the Islamic World Council for Preaching and Relief under the leadership of the late Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mohammed Sayed Tantawy.

Signatures:

- Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- El Nadim Center against violence and torture
- Lawyers for Lawyers
- MENA Rights Group
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Refugees Platform In Egypt (RPE)
- Middle East Democracy Center
- EuroMed Rights
- Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression AFTE
- Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
- REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms

- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- EgyptWide for Human Rights
- Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance
- Musawa-The Palestinian Centre for the independence of judiciary and legal profession
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Arab Centre for Independence of Judiciary & Legal Profession (ACIJLP)
- The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa (WHRDMENA)
- People in Need

Published at https://humena.org/call-for-the-immediate-release-of-hoda-abdelmonem-and-dropping-of-fabricated-charges/
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