

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS STILL TARGETED

**A Cairo court has confirmed a request to freeze the assets of Al-Andalus Institute for Tolerance and anti-Violence Studies and its director Ahmed Samih. Other human rights defenders continued to be targeted by Egyptian authorities in the “foreign funding case”.**

North Cairo Criminal court ruled on 15 June to freeze the assets of Al-Andalus Institute for Tolerance and anti-Violence Studies and its director **Ahmed Samih**. He only found out about the asset freeze request on 12 June through a state-run newspaper. It said the request came from judges investigating the registration and sources of funding of NGOs in case 173 of 2011, dubbed by media as “the foreign funding case”. **Mohamed Zaree**, Egypt director of Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), learned on 26 May at Cairo airport that he was subject to a travel ban. Mohamed Zaree doesn't know which judge ordered it or what case it relates to, but said the “foreign funding case” is the only possible explanation. Others banned from travelling in relation to the case include **Hossam Bahgat**, founder of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and **Gamal Eid**, founder of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI). Also on May 26, ANHRI lawyer **Rawda Ahmed** was summoned for questioning in the case. It was postponed to June 2 and delayed again but with no other date yet given.

On July 17, Cairo Criminal Court will review a judicial order to freeze the assets of: **Bahey el-Din Hassan**, CIHRS director, members of his family as well as some of CIHRS's staff; **Mostafa al-Hassan**, director of the Hisham Mubarak Law Center, **Abdel Hafez Tayel**, director of the Egyptian Center for the Right to Education, as well as Hossam Bahgat, Gamal Eid, and Eid's wife and daughter. A request to freeze the asset of CIHRS has also been made. The authorities have also repeatedly attempted to close the El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence on the basis of performing unlicensed work; although licensed as a medical clinic since 1993.

### Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Egyptian authorities to lift all travel bans and asset freezes imposed upon human rights defenders and other NGO staff for exercising their right to freedom of association;
- Urging them to immediately revoke their decision to close El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence;
- Urging them to abide by their own pledges made in March 2015 at the conclusion of Egypt's Universal Periodic Review before the United Nations Human Rights Council to “respect the free exercise of the associations defending human rights” and comply with their obligations under Article 75 of Egypt's 2014 Constitution and Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a State Party.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JULY 2016 TO:

#### Minister of Social Solidarity

Ghada Waly

Ministry of Social Solidarity

19 Maraghi Street

Giza, Arab Republic of Egypt

Fax: +202 2794 8257/+202 3337 5390

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign

Affairs for Human Rights

Laila Bahaa El Din

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Cornice al-Nil, Cairo

Arab Republic of Egypt

Fax: +202 2574 9713

Email: Contact.Us@mfa.gov.eg

Twitter: @MfaEgypt

#### **And copies to:**

President of the National Council for Human Rights

Mohamed Fayek

69 Giza St. – next to the Embassy of

Saudi Arabia

Arab Republic of Egypt

Fax: +202 3762 4852

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR NASSER AHMED KAMEL ALI, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street W1K 1DW, 020 7499 3304/2401, Fax 020 7491 1542, egtamboff@gmail.com, and [eg.emb\\_london@mfa.gov.eg](mailto:eg.emb_london@mfa.gov.eg)

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 81/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE12/3886/2016/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defenders and groups in Egypt are facing an unprecedented crackdown. The authorities have stepped-up a long-running criminal inquiry into NGOs' registration and funding, questioning human rights defenders and preventing them from travelling abroad. Those affected also include Mozn Hassan, director and founder of Nazra for Feminist Studies.

Many of the targeted groups are licensed in some fashion, including as non-profit groups, law firms or medical clinics. Still, some have relocated their staff outside Egypt or curtailed their operations rather than register under the onerous associations law dating to Hosni Mubarak's presidency. The law empowers the government to shut down any group virtually at will, freeze its assets, confiscate its property and reject nominees to its governing board. But, even registered groups have not escaped investigation: the Egyptian Democratic Academy (EDA) successfully registered in January 2015, and Nazra registered in 2007.

Travel bans have been imposed on four of EDA's current and former staff members including political activist Esraa Abdel Fattah, as well as Hossameldin Ali, Ahmed Ghonim and Bassim Samir. A number of other human rights defenders have also faced travel bans imposed by courts, prosecutors and security agencies. On 19 April, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's office issued a statement noting the situation facing human rights groups in Egypt, and calling on the authorities to grant the defendants "due process and fair trial standards". In March, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed "grave concern" about the situation facing Egyptian human rights organizations.

Egypt's military government began investigations into human rights groups in 2011. In December 2011, security forces and prosecutors raided the offices of five international NGOs and two Egyptian human rights organizations. In 2012, 43 staff members of international groups were tried in court on charges of working without registration and receiving foreign funding without government permission. In June 2013, the court sentenced all the defendants to prison terms of between one and five years. The court issued most of the sentences in the absence of the defendants, handing down suspended sentences against the few who were in court.

Both the Law on Associations and Penal Code criminalize accepting funding from international sources without government permission. Egypt's government ordered all NGOs to register under the Law on Associations in 2014, threatening to hold "accountable" those that did not. Egypt's laws restricting the foreign funding of civil society have been repeatedly criticized by UN bodies monitoring Egypt's compliance with international human rights treaties. On 19 April 2016, an Egyptian administrative court ruled that NGOs had the right to receive funding from international sources, so long as such funding did not threaten "public order, safety or morality". In practice the authorities have frequently used such grounds as pretext to arbitrarily block the funding of Egyptian human rights groups. Under Article 78 of the Penal Code, individuals may also face a 25-year prison sentence and a 500,000 Egyptian-pound fine (US\$56,160) for receiving money or materials for acts that would harm Egyptian "national interest", undermine the country's "territorial integrity" or disturb "the public peace". The right to freedom of association is established under Article 75 of Egypt's Constitution and Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a State Party.

Further information on UA: 81/16 Index: MDE 12/4251/2016 Issue Date: 17 June 2016