

9 February 2017

Egypt – Authorities close down premises of El Nadeem Center

On 9 February, the offices of **El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture** were sealed off by police. In the process, the police officers arrested the building janitor.

[El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture](#) is an independent Egyptian non-governmental organisation founded in 1993 by three prominent women human rights defenders. El Nadeem Center provides social support and medical care for victims of torture, and is the only centre in Egypt which provides specialised psychological support to survivors of violence in detention centres. The organisation carries out advocacy and issues monthly summary reports on instances of torture, medical negligence and death in police custody. It also runs a program addressing sexual and domestic violence against women.

On 9 February, a large police force went to the office of El Nadeem Center to seal off the premises. Three apartment in which El Nadeem Center operates were sealed on the basis of an administrative closure order signed by the Ministry of Health on 8 February 2016 and approved by the Cairo district authorities on 15 February 2016. The order alleged that El Nadeem Center had been in breach of their “licence conditions.” While the order only referred to one apartment, all three apartments were sealed off. The building janitor, who immediately informed the staff of El Nadeem Center, was then taken for questioning. Dr [Aida Seif El-Dawla](#), co-founder of El Nadeem Center, arrived to the office before police left. She immediately enquired about the arrest of the building janitor, but was then threatened that she would also be arrested.

El Nadeem Center has previously been subject to judicial harassment by Egyptian authorities in an attempt to obstruct their work. On 17 February 2016, the organisation was presented with an order by Azbakeyya district authorities for the closure of the Center for “breaching licence conditions”. Earlier in February 2016, an inspection of El Nadeem Center was carried out by a Ministry of Health official without any official papers or an inspection warrant, following an order from the Ministry of Health. No breaches of the Center's licence were reported subsequent to this inspection.

On 10 November 2016, Egyptian authorities instructed Crédit Agricole Bank to block the organisation's bank account until its status conformed to the NGO Law (Law No. 84/2002). On 16 November, El Nadeem Center's bank account was unblocked after the organisation proved it was not subjected to the rules of NGO Law.

Individual staff members have also been the target of harassment. Aida Seif El-Dawla was banned from travelling on 23 November 2016. The human rights defender was travelling from Cairo International Airport when she was informed of a travel ban against her as a result of her involvement in the foreign funding case – also known as Case No. 173.

Front Line Defenders condemns the unprecedented move by Egyptian authorities to seal the office of El Nadeem Center. Front Line Defenders strongly believes that the continued judicial harassment of the organisation is as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally overturn the closure order against El Nadeem Center and allow it to reopen and operate without interference;
2. Immediately lift the travel ban against Aida Seif El-Dawla and all other Egyptian human rights defenders that are subjected to travel bans solely as a result of its legitimate human rights activities;
3. Cease all forms of harassment against El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture as Front Line Defenders believes the organisation has been targeted solely as a result of its legitimate human rights activities;
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.