

4 September 2019

Egypt: Arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of human rights defender Eman Al-Helw

On 3 September 2019, the Criminal Court of Cairo renewed the detention of human rights defender Eman Al-Helw for another 45 days. Eman Al-Helw has been detained at the police station of Abdeen since 28 February 2019, in connection to a Facebook post in which she called for demonstrations and criticised the Egyptian government's response regarding the Ramses train station accident on 27 February 2019, in which over 25 people lost their lives.

[Eman Al-Helw](#) is an actress and human rights defender who raises awareness of and promotes the rights of trans people in Egypt in workshops and on social media.

On 28 February 2019, Eman Al-Helw was arrested and was forcibly disappeared for the first four days of her detention. On 4 March 2019, Eman Al-Helw was presented before the State Security Prosecution in Cairo for the renewal of her detention for another 15 days. Eman Al-Helw is currently in preventive detention which is being renewed every 45 days. The human rights defender is facing several charges, including “joining a terrorist organization” and “misuse of social media”.

Eman Al-Helw has been and is subjected to ill-treatment while in detention; on 18 March 2019, she was forced to undergo a full external medical examination. This examination was made at the general hospital and included an inspection of her genitals against her will. The human rights defender is being held in a police station in dire conditions since 4 March 2019. She is kept in an underground cell without natural light or fresh air together with more than 60 other detainees. She is not permitted to receive visits from her family or lawyer.

Even though the human rights defender is suffering from a severe depression caused by her difficult situation, no psychological aid has been offered to Eman Al-Helw. During the last court hearing on 3 September 2019, her lawyer asked the judge to meet with Eman Al-Helw, and to consider her psychological condition, but the judge refused to meet her.

Front Line Defenders is highly concerned about the continued arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of Eman Al-Helw, which appears to be an attempt to silence her voice demanding an end to the impunity related to the Ramses train station accident.

Front Line Defenders urges the Egyptian authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Eman Al-Helw and drop all charges against her, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights.
2. Allow Eman Al-Helw immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyer.
3. Carry out an immediate and impartial investigation into the ill-treatment while in detention and the forced medical examination of Eman Al-Helw.
4. Provide adequate psychological attention to Eman Al-Helw.

5. Ensure that the treatment of Eman Al-Helw while in detention adheres to the conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
6. Transfer Eman Al-Helw From the police station to a general prison;
7. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Egypt are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.