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Egypt: Physical and sexual assault against woman human rights defender Solafa Magdy

On 31 January 2021, the defence lawyers of woman human rights defender **Solafa Magdy** submitted a complaint to several Egyptian authorities regarding the physical and sexual assault which Solafa Magdy was reportedly subjected to on 29 November 2020 and on 19 January 2021 in Al-Qanater women's prison.

[Solafa Magdy](#) is a journalist and a woman human rights defender. She is a co-founder of 'Everyday Footage', a school that provides training programmes in mobile journalism. As part of her work, she monitors and raises awareness on human rights violations in Egypt, particularly with regard to women's rights, minority rights and the rights of asylum seekers.

On 31 January 2021, the defence lawyers of Solafa Magdy submitted a complaint to several parties including the Public Prosecutor, the State Security Prosecutor, the Attorney General, and the director of Al-Qanater women's prison. The complaint concerns the physical and sexual assault Solafa Magdy was reportedly subject to in Al-Qanater women's prison. On 29 November 2020, at 11:00 pm, three female prisoner officers blindfolded Solafa Magdy and took her from her cell to a room to be interrogated. The complaint asserts that the interrogator said to the defender that "I will release you from prison if you answer all my questions", and proceeded to ask Solafa Magdy to be an informant for him. When she refused, he reportedly threatened that the woman human rights defender would not see her son or husband again, and then he sexually assaulted her.

On 19 January 2021, Solafa Magdy was subjected to a physical inspection before she could be transferred from Al-Qanater women's prison to the Criminal Court of Cairo to attend her hearing session. During the physical inspection, the woman human rights defender has said that she was made remove all of her clothes and after the inspection, she was violently grabbed by a police officer and put into a police van.

On arriving in prison, Solafa Magdy was subjected to a forced genitalia examination, which caused severe bleeding and agitation as the woman human rights defender had previously had an operation on her uterus. Subjecting women to virginity tests is common practice by prisons in Egypt and can be seen as a strategy to humiliate them. On 27 January 2021, Solafa Magdy's mother visited her in prison and reported on the significant deterioration and worrying condition of her daughter's health, and that two female prison officer's had to help the woman human rights defender walk.

Woman human rights defender Solafa Magdy has been in preventive detention since 26 November 2019. She was [detained along with her husband Hossam Saïad and journalist Mohamed Salah](#) in a

coffee shop in Cairo. Immediately after their detention, the couple were forcibly disappeared for just under 24 hours. On 28 November 2019, Solafa Magdy appeared before the State Security Prosecutors, who accused her of being involved in case 488. She is facing the charges of 'joining an illegal organisation', 'misuse of social media' and 'spreading false news'. On 30 August 2020, the Public Prosecutor accused her of case No 855 of the year 2020, which includes charges such 'joining an illegal organisation' and 'recruiting new members into the organisation'.

According to Solafa Magdy's lawyer, after her detention the woman human rights defender was subjected to a severe beating by police during her interrogation. Solafa Magdy and her husband have been in preventive detention for more than one year, while their seven year old son has been denied his right to be with his parents. According to Egyptian law, one parent is permitted to be released in order take care of the child in the case that both of the parents are under preventive detention, yet the Public Prosecutor has refused to apply the law and to release Solafa Magdy or her partner.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the reported sexual assault and the sexual harassment against woman human rights defender Solafa Magdy. Front Line Defenders believes that the human rights defender is being detained and harassed solely because of her peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urge the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release woman human rights defender Solafa Magdy, 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. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the reported sexual and physical assault against Solafa Magdy, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Solafa Magdy, 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;
4. Allow Solafa Magdy immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyers;
5. Cease targeting all 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.