

23 September 2019

## **Egypt: Detention of human rights defender Mahienour El-Masry and other human rights defenders**

On 22 September 2019, human rights defender **Mahienour El-Masry** was arrested by security forces outside of the State Prosecution Office in Cairo. Her place of detention remains unknown. Given the modalities of her arrest, it is believed that no arrest warrant was presented.

[Mahienour El-Masry](#) is a human rights defender who works to promote judicial independence and prisoners' rights by organising peaceful protests, raising awareness using social media, and organising support for political prisoners in the form of solidarity events and bail fundraising.

On 22 September 2019, Mahienour El-Masry was leaving the State Prosecution Office when she was taken by security officials in plain clothes and forced into a van. Family and lawyer visits are not possible as the location of her detention is unknown.

Mahienour El-Masry was previously harassed and detained by the Egyptian authorities. On 30 December 2016, she received a prison sentence of two years by the Alexandria Misdemeanours Court for “protesting without a permit”, which was overturned on appeal. In 2015, she was sentenced to one year and three months in prison in relation to a sit-in to protest against police brutality. In 2014, she was sentenced to two years for participating in demonstrations; the sentence was later reduced to six months.

The arbitrary detention of Mahienour El-Masry is in response to demonstrations which began on 20 September 2019 demanding the resignation of the Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. According to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, 373 persons were arbitrarily detained in Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Mahalla and Suez since the start of the demonstrations, including several human rights defenders. The Egyptian security forces responded to the demonstrations with tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition. The detained human rights defenders are facing several charges, including “joining illegal an organisation”, “demonstration without a permit”, and the “spread of false news”. Human rights defender [Mohamed Ibrahim](#) was detained on 21 September 2019 when he reported to the police station to comply with the precautionary measures of his release in connection to a separate case against him from 2018.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the detention Mahienour El-Masry and other human rights defenders in connection to their peaceful and legitimate human rights work and the exercise of their right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

### **Front Line Defenders urge the authorities in Egypt to:**

1. Immediately release Mahienour El-Masry, and all other human rights defenders, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work;
2. Immediately drop all charges against Mahienour El-Masry, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;

3. Ensure that the treatment of Mahienour El-Masry, and all other human rights defenders, 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. Inform the family and lawyer of Mahienour El-Masry of the place of her detention, and allow them immediate and unfettered access to her;
5. 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.