

15 October 2019

## Egypt: Torture and ongoing detention of woman human rights defender **Esraa Abdel Fattah**

On 13 October 2019, the Supreme Public Prosecution of Egypt ordered the fifteen day preventive detention of woman human rights defender and journalist **Esraa Abdel Fattah**. On the day of her arrest, 12 October 2019, she was beaten and tortured, and has begun an open-ended hunger strike in protest.

[Esraa Abdel Fattah](#) is a woman human rights defender and journalist at al-Tahrir newspaper. She was project manager at the Egyptian Democratic Academy, a non-governmental organization that promotes the use of new media tools to foster democracy and human rights. Esraa Abdel Fattah is known for her efforts to promote workers' rights and democracy; she began her human rights work in 2008, when she co-founded the April 6 Movement.

On 12 October around 19:30, Egyptian security forces in plain clothes stopped Esraa Abdel Fattah's car and arrested her. Following her detention for 24 hours in an unknown location, Esraa Abdel Fattah appeared at the Supreme Public Prosecution on 13 October 2019, which ordered her preventive detention for 15 days. The human rights defender is facing charges of "joining an illegal organisation", "defamation and the spread of false news" and "misuse of social media".

Esraa Abdel Fattah was tortured while in police custody. Her lawyer has stated that during her 24 hour interrogation she was blindfolded, handcuffed and severely beaten. She was forced to give up the password to her phone or be subjected to electric shocks and was further physically attacked by a police officer once she complied. Despite suffering from bodily bruising, Esraa Abdel Fattah has been denied medical assistance. She is being detained at a local police station in Cairo where family and lawyer visits have been banned. She will be transferred to Al-Qanateer women's prison on 15 October 2019.

Esraa Abdel Fattah has been frequently harassed and detained by the Egyptian authorities. She has been under a travel ban since January 2015 and was repeatedly summoned and interrogated in connection with case 173/2011, otherwise known as the "foreign funding" case.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the continued detention and judicial harassment of human rights defenders in Egypt. Front Line Defenders believes that the detention and torture of Esraa Abdel Fattah was solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

### Front Line Defenders urge the Egyptian Authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Esraa Abdel Fattah and drop all charges against her, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Esraa Abdel Fattah 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.
3. Allow Esraa Abdel Fattah immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyer.

4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the torture of human rights defender Esraa Abdel Fattah, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

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.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom 2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation of the torture of human rights defender ,Esraa Abdel Fattah, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 11: *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession (...)”*, and to Article 5: *“For the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels: (a) To meet or assemble peacefully; (b) To form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups”*.

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director