

24 June 2020

Egypt: Sanaa Seif abducted and placed in preventive detention

On 23 June 2020, several plain clothed Security Force officers abducted woman human rights defender Sanaa Seif in front of the Prosecutor General's office in the Rehab district of Cairo. She was returned to the Public Prosecutor's office an hour and a half later.

[Sanaa Seif](#) is a human rights defender, who was actively involved in the peaceful demonstrations during the Egyptian revolution in 2011. She consistently calls for the release of imprisoned human rights defenders and political prisoners in Egypt, and her work also focuses on promoting social and economic rights in Egypt. When she was 17 years old, Sanaa Seif and a group of friends launched the independent newspaper "Al-gornal", to address the issues at the heart of the Arab Spring. She is also the sister of woman human rights defender Mona Seif and activist Alaa Abd El Fattah.

On 22 June 2020, Sanaa Seif, her sister Mona Seif and their mother, human rights defender Lila Soueif, were physically assaulted and robbed by unidentified women in front of Tora prison. Sanaa Seif, her sister and mother had been presenting themselves at the police station for a number of days, on the promise by the prison authorities that they would be given a letter from their imprisoned brother and son, Alaa Abd El Fattah. The family have not heard from him since March 2020 when family visits were suspended in the context of COVID-19. The physical assault occurred in front of several police men, however they did not intervene in the incident. Sanaa Seif suffered serious bruising as a result of the attack.

On 23 June 2020, the three women went with their lawyers to the office of the Public Prosecutor to file a complaint regarding the incident the previous day in front of Tora prison. Sanaa Seif and her lawyer were stopped at the entrance to the building and asked to show their ID. Upon presenting their ID cards, Sanaa Seif's lawyer was pushed aside and the woman human rights defender was forced into an unmarked van, which drove away and was followed by three unmarked cars. Sanaa Seif was taken to an unknown location and was then brought back to the office of the Public Prosecutor about an hour and a half later.

She was then interrogated by the State Security Prosecutor and following this, sentenced to 15 days in preventive detention on charges of spreading false rumours, inciting terrorist crimes and misuse of social media. That same day, the Public Prosecution released a statement, which linked the charges against Sanaa Seif to her social media posts, where she advocated for the release of imprisoned human rights defenders and political activists in the context of COVID-19.

Sanaa Seif and her family have been repeatedly harassed by the Egyptian authorities in recent years regarding their human rights activities. In 2016, Sanaa Seif was imprisoned for six months, whilst her brother, activist Alaa Abd El Fattah has been in arbitrary detention since September 2019.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the continual harassment of woman human rights defender Sanna Seif and her family members. Front Line Defenders believes that Sanaa Seif was abducted and detained in reprisal for her peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders urge the Egyptian Authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Sanaa Seif, 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. Ensure that the treatment of Sanaa Seif, 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 Sanaa Seif immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyers;
4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical assault against and robbery of Sanaa Seif and her family, and the abduction of the woman human rights defender, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
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.

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