

# URGENT ACTION

## DETAINED LAWYER IN CRITICAL HEALTH CONDITION

On 30 November 2020, the family of 63-year-old human rights lawyer Hoda Abdelmoniem learned that she was hospitalized after suffering from suspected kidney failure and severe pain. Her relatives last saw her during a court hearing on 27 October 2020 but continue to be denied prison visits and access to her medical records, raising their anguish about her health and wellbeing. She has been held for more than two years without trial, exceeding the maximum limit for pre-trial detention permissible under Egyptian law.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi*

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*Dear Counsellor,*

*Human rights lawyer **Hoda Abdelmoinem** has been arbitrarily detained for over two years, solely in relation to her human rights work. On 27 October 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court renewed her detention for 45 days pending investigations into unfounded “terrorism”-related charges. Hoda Abdelmoinem's pre-trial detention has exceeded the limit of two years permissible under Egyptian law.*

*Officials at the al-Qanater Prison for women, where she is held, have denied Hoda Abdelmoinem a single prison visit or other contact with her family since her detention on 1 November 2018. On 30 November 2020, her relatives learned that she was transferred to an external hospital after suffering from severe pain. While her loved ones have been denied access to her medical records and therefore are kept in the dark about her exact medical condition, they were informed by other prisoners' families that one of her kidneys had failed, while the other was functioning poorly. On 1 December 2020, the Ministry of Interior claimed in a Facebook post that she had received adequate medical care and that her condition was stable. Hoda Abdelmonein, who has high blood pressure, was hospitalized earlier this year after suffering a heart attack. The prison administration denied Hoda Abdelmonein's lawyers verbal request to access her medical records. They plan to submit a request to the court during her next hearing scheduled for 6 December.*

*Her daughter told Amnesty International that relatives called the prison administration three times following the resumption of prison visits, suspended between March and August 2020 to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and were given verbal authorization to visit on 12 September 2020. When they arrived at the scheduled time, they were told the visit was cancelled. Her relatives last saw her during her court hearing on 27 October 2020. A judge at Cairo Criminal Court allowed them to speak to her face to face without bars for about two minutes for only the second time since her arrest. This time was insufficient for them to obtain detailed information about her health and situation in detention.*

***We therefore urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Hoda Abdelmoniem and drop all charges against her as her detention stems solely from her human rights work. Pending her release, we also call on you to ensure that Hoda Abdelmoniem is provided with the means to regularly communicate with her family***

***and lawyers and has regular access to adequate health care and her medical records and for her family to be provided with detailed information about her health condition.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

On 1 November 2018, National Security Agency forces (NSA) broke into the house of Hoda Abdelmoniem in Cairo at 1:30 am, ransacked it, and took her blindfolded to her mother's house. While the NSA forces searched her mother's house, she was left blindfolded in a police vehicle. The officers confirmed to her daughter, who was present during the arrest, that they belonged to the NSA, but did not present an arrest warrant, mention the reason for her arrest or clarify where she was being taken. Hoda was not allowed to take any medicine or personal belongings with her. After nearly three weeks of being subjected to enforced disappearance, she was brought to the State Supreme Security Prosecution (SSSP), a special branch of the prosecution responsible for investigating national security threats, on 21 November 2018. On the following day, 22 November, her relatives were able to see her at the SSSP office. They reported that she was wearing the same clothes she wore on the day of her arrest, appeared to be terrified, and refused to talk about her detention. She was then taken back to an undisclosed location. Her family briefly saw her again on 24 and 28 November 2018 at the SSSP office. She was subjected to enforced disappearance again between 2 December 2018 and 14 January 2019, as authorities refused to disclose her whereabouts to her relatives and lawyers.

On 15 January 2019, she again appeared in front of SSSP prosecutors, who renewed her detention for 15 days. She told her daughter that she did not know where she was being detained. At the time, her daughter reported that Hoda Abdelmoniem had lost a lot of weight, apparently due to the insufficient and poor quality of food. Following her questioning by the SSSP, NSA forces took her blindfolded to an unknown location. After another two weeks of being subjected to enforced disappearance, she was transferred to al-Qanater Prison for women on 31 January 2019.

On the day of Hoda Abdelmoniem's arrest, 1 November 2018, the Egyptian authorities launched a series of raids, arresting at least 31 human rights defenders and lawyers; 10 women and 21 men. The Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), which documents enforced disappearances and the use of the death penalty, and provides legal aid to victims of human rights violations, was particularly targeted by the crackdown. In a statement published on 1 November 2018 announcing the suspension of its human rights work, ECRF cited the situation in Egypt as incompatible with human rights work and demanded the UN Human Rights Council to intervene.

Security forces banned Hoda's family from delivering food and clothes as permitted for others held in al-Qanater Prison for women, only allowing the delivery of medicine and money for her canteen account. When relatives asked about the reasons for the ban, an official referenced "instructions" by the National Security Agency, a specialized police force.

Hoda Abdelmoniem volunteered as a consultant for the ECRF and had been active in documenting human rights violations including cases of enforced disappearances. She is a former member of the National Council for Human Rights and of the Egyptian Bar Association. Hoda Abdelmoniem had been banned from travelling outside of Egypt since late 2013 without being charged with any offence. On 27 November 2020, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) has granted its 2020 Human Rights Award to Hoda Abdelmoneim and six other detained lawyers in Egypt.

In cases investigated by the SSSP, prosecutors and judges routinely renew the pre-trial detention of thousands of suspects held pending investigations into unfounded "terrorism"-related charges, in some cases in the defendants' absence and without allowing lawyers to challenge the legality of their detention. Many, including Hoda Abdelmoneim are held in pre-trial detention for periods exceeding the absolute maximum limit of two years. According to Article 143 of the Code of Criminal Procedures, the maximum period of pre-trial detention must not

exceed six months for defendants accused of crimes punishable by up to three years in prison, 18 months for crimes punishable by up to 15 years in prison and two years for crimes punishable by death or life imprisonment.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 29 January 2021.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Hoda Abdelmoniem (she/her)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2932/2020/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2932/2020/en/)