



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



a joint programme
OMCT **fidh**
The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

Legal Retaliation against Egypt's Human Rights Defenders Must Stop!

Brussels, 8 October 2014

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) together with the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against torture (OMCT), are very concerned about the pre-trial detention of Egyptian human rights defender Ms. Yara Sallam, who has been detained together with 21 co-defendants since June on charges under Egypt's draconian Protest Law.

The 22 activists were arrested on 21 June during the dispersal of a demonstration calling for the revocation of the Protest Law. Yara Sallam, a researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), was arrested along with her cousin while they were buying drinks from a kiosk in the vicinity of the protest. Her cousin was released hours later, with no charges.

Yara Sallam was charged with participating in a demonstration without authorisation as well as damaging property and displaying force. None of the defendants appeared in the videos presented as evidence, and no evidence has been presented of Yara Sallam's engagement in violence or destruction of property. Witness testimonies against the defendants were all presented by policemen, in addition to a report from the National Security Agency and the criminal investigations department. According to one police report, some of the violent acts the defendant is accused of committing occurred at 9.30 pm, after the time of her arrest.

The first hearing of the case was held on 29 June in the Heliopolis Misdemeanour Court, at the Police Institute in the Tora Prison Complex. The hearing was adjourned until 13 September, only to be adjourned yet again until 11 October. This delay is suspiciously long for misdemeanour cases, particularly given the continued detention of the defendants. The presiding judge has repeatedly rejected the defence lawyers' request to schedule earlier hearings and release the defendants, despite the lack of legal grounds requiring pre-trial detention.

EMHRN, FIDH and OMCT are concerned that Yara Sallam may be facing trumped-up charges in retaliation for her human rights activism. On the night of her arrest, she was repeatedly interrogated about the nature of her work and the management of EIPR. Despite the lack of evidence, the release of her cousin arrested under the exact same circumstances, substantiate the assumption that Yara Sallam's continued detention may be used as a punishment for her human rights advocacy.

Worryingly, Egyptian authorities have increasingly resorted to pre-trial detention under the Protest Law to lock-up protesters, activists and dissidents.

Ahead of the upcoming hearing on 11 October, our organisations call upon the Egyptian authorities to guarantee the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, to revoke the Protest Law or to amend it in compliance with international standards and to immediately release all individuals arbitrarily detained under this contentious law.