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## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the conviction of lawyer Mohamed Ramadan in Egypt**

Toronto, ON — The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the conviction of lawyer Mohamed Ramadan in Egypt.

Mohamed Ramadan is a human rights lawyer whose work includes the representation of human rights defenders, political prisoners and victims of police brutality. He is a former member of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (“ANHRI”). The ANHRI is a non-governmental organization devoted to promoting freedom of expression across the Middle East and North Africa. Based in Cairo, Egypt, the organization focuses on supporting free expression and assisting persons detained for expressing their personal views. It also advocates against censorship by Arab governments.

It has come to the Law Society’s attention that on April 12, 2017, Mohamed Ramadan was summarily found guilty of “insulting the president, misusing social media, and inciting violence”. Consequently, he was sentenced to ten years in prison, following which he is to be placed under house arrest and banned from using the internet for a five-year period. The conviction was rendered on the allegation that by creating Facebook pages which featured publications and sentiments with the potential to disrupt public order, Mohamed Ramadan incited terrorism, harmed national unity and social peace, and weakened the public’s trust in the ruling regime.

According to Mohamed Ramadan and his lawyers, the case against him has been fabricated by Egyptian authorities as a direct response to his work on behalf of victims of torture by the Egyptian police. Such an inference could be drawn from the fact that the evidence used against him in court consisted of posts published on fake Facebook profiles that had been created by a third party for the purposes of impersonating Mohamed Ramadan without his knowledge or consent. Moreover, all but one of the witnesses who testified against him were representatives of the Egyptian police force.

The Law Society of Upper Canada is deeply troubled by Mohamed Ramadan’s situation and urges the Government of Egypt to comply with Egypt’s obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations’ *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

Furthermore, Article 23 provides:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the Government of Egypt to:

- a. immediately and unconditionally vacate the conviction rendered against Mohamed Ramadan;
- b. guarantee all of the procedural rights that should be accorded to Mohamed Ramadan in accordance with his right to a fair trial;
- c. ensure that Mohamed Ramadan is afforded regular access to his lawyer(s) and family during his incarceration;
- d. put an end to all acts of harassment against Mohamed Ramadan and all other lawyers in Egypt;
- e. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mohamed Ramadan;
- f. ensure that all lawyers in Egypt can carry out their professional duties and activities without fear of reprisals, physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- g. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.