

Public Statement

The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concerns about the detention and sentencing of human rights lawyer Mahienour El-Massry

Toronto — The Law Society of Upper Canada is gravely concerned about the detention and sentencing of Mahienour El-Massry.

On May 20, 2014, the Sidi Gaber Misdemeanour Court in Alexandria, Egypt rejected the objection filed by Mahienour El-Massry, a human rights lawyer, regarding the sentence issued against her *in absentia* on January 2, 2014, convicting her to two years' imprisonment and a fine of EGP 50,000 (approximately \$7,609 CAD). She was sentenced for “protest without a permit” and “assaulting security forces”. Mahienour El-Massry was immediately detained after the hearing.

Mahienour El-Massry and seven other members of the political group “Revolutionary Socialists”, including human rights lawyer Hassan Mustafa were charged after they organized a protest on December 2, 2013. The protest was related to Khaled Saeed's murder retrial. Khaled Saeed became a symbol of police repression during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution when he was killed by police forces on June 6, 2012.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about situations where lawyers who work for the protection and respect of human rights are themselves targeted for exercising their freedoms and rights under international law. International human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* state that respect for human rights is essential to advancing the rule of law. Article 16 of the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states “governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely; and 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 18 states “lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions”.

The Law Society urges the government of Egypt to:

- a. guarantee all the procedural rights that should be accorded to Mahienour El-Massry and other human rights defenders in Egypt;
- b. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mahienour El-Massry;
- c. put an end to all acts of harassment against Mahienour El-Massry and other human rights defenders in Egypt;
- d. ensure that all lawyers can carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- e. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 46,000 lawyers and 6,300 paralegals in the Province of Ontario, Canada, and the Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

The Law Society urges the legal community to intervene in support of members of the legal profession in Egypt in their effort to advance the respect of human rights and to promote the rule of law.

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