

# URGENT ACTION

## THREE JOURNALISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

On 26 November 2019, plainclothes police officers arbitrarily arrested journalists, Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah, from a cafe in Dokki, Cairo. They confiscated their mobile phones, laptops and car. A day after, State Security prosecutors detained Solafa and Mohamed, pending investigation on charges of “joining a terrorist group” and “spreading false news”, while Hossam was accused of “membership in a terrorist group.” In detention, NSA officers beat Solafa on her right arm and side for refusing to give them access to her mobile. The prosecutor renewed their detention for 15 days pending investigations.

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

*Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi*  
Office of the Public Prosecutor  
Madinat al-Rehab  
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt  
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Dear Counsellor,

On 26 November 2019, plainclothes police officers arbitrarily arrested journalists, **Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah**, from a cafe in Dokki, Cairo. They confiscated their mobile phones and Solafa's car and took them to Dokki police station. National Security Agency (NSA) officers verbally assaulted and beat Solafa on her right arm and side after she refused to give them the access code to her mobile. During the initial interrogation, NSA officers questioned all three of them in an unknown location about their previous journalistic work, employers and incomes, as well as on their activism defending their friend, Esraa Abdelfattah, another detained journalist and activist.

The following day, State Security prosecutors ordered the detention of Solafa and Mohamed, in connection with trumped-up charges of “joining a terrorist group” and “spreading false news,” while Hossam was accused of “membership in a terrorist group.” Hossam and Mohamed are currently detained in Tora prison in Cairo, and Solafa is held in Al Qanater women's prison in Qalyubia, pending investigations as part of case 488 of 2019, which relates to the March 2019 anti-government protests.

Amnesty International considers Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed to be prisoners of conscience detained solely for carrying out their work as journalists and for defending victims of human rights violations.

**I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed. I call on you to also ensure that – pending their release – they are granted access to their lawyers, family and medical care; and that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment. I finally urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained solely for carrying out their legitimate journalistic work and for peacefully expressing their opinions.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah are freelance journalists working for different media outlets. Solafa and Hossam are married and have a seven-year-old son. Amnesty International believes that their detention is solely based on their writings and social media activism, defending prisoners of conscience and victims of human rights violations – including their friend Esraa Abdelfattah, a journalist and activist who is also in detention.

Since President al-Sisi came to power, the authorities have arbitrarily blocked at least 515 websites, raided and/or closed the offices of at least eight media outlets and arbitrarily detained scores of journalists. The organisation is aware of at least 37 journalists currently detained since 2014. Among them, at least 20 journalists, who were arrested and detained solely for carrying out their work, including conducting field work, publishing a story or interview, or covering anti-government protests.

The arrest of Solafa, Hossam and Mohamed come in the context of the post-September protest crackdown, the largest on dissenting voices since 2014, and two days after the raid of independent media website, Mada Masr, and the brief detention of four journalists from Mada Masr, who were all released on the same day.

On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke across Egyptian cities, calling on President al-Sisi to resign. The protests have been triggered by social media videos of Mohamed Ali, a former army contractor who has accused army leaders and the president of wasting public money on building luxury properties. Amnesty International has [documented](#) how the Egyptian security forces have carried out sweeping arrests of peaceful protesters, rounded up journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, lawyers and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests from taking place.

According to Egyptian human rights lawyers, the authorities have arrested at least 4000 individuals in relation to their perceived participation or support of the protests. The authorities ordered the pre-trial detention of at least 3,715, pending investigations over “terrorism” charges in the largest single protests-related criminal investigation in Egypt’s history.

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

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 29 January 2020

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Solafa Magdy (she/her), Hossam el-Sayed (he/him), and Mohamed Salah (he/him)

**ADDITIONAL TARGETS:** Embassy of Egypt, 26 South St, Mayfair, London W1K 1DW