

# URGENT ACTION

## POLITICAL ACTIVIST ARBITRARILY DETAINED

In May 2020, the authorities allowed Céline Lebrun Shaath, wife of prisoner of conscience and activist Ramy Shaath, to call him for the first time since his arrest. Ramy has been behind bars for a year pending investigations into accusations of “aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals”, stemming solely from his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and his right to participate in public affairs. On 18 April 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court had decided to arbitrarily put him on Egypt’s “terrorist list” for a period of five years.

**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,

Prisoner of conscience **Ramy Shaath** has been arbitrarily detained for a year, since 4 July 2019, pending investigations into the so-called “Hope Case” (Case 390/2019), which involves at least 105 individuals, including politicians and journalists.

In May 2020, the Egyptian authorities finally allowed Ramy’s wife, Céline Lebrun Shaath, to speak to Ramy on the phone for 45 minutes for the first time since his arrest. Ramy, who is held in Tora Prison, told Céline that he is detained in a 25 square meters cell with 17 other detainees, amid the absence of adequate measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 among the guards and detainees. Céline, who is based in France, also received assurances from the Egyptian authorities to grant her the possibility to return to Egypt for an in-person visit, once the “health situation allows” and air borders reopen.

The Egyptian authorities suspended all prison visits on 10 March as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but failed to introduce alternative means of regular communication between detainees and their loved ones. Ramy’s last visit by Egypt-based relatives was on 4 March 2020. In June 2020, the Egyptian authorities finally allowed Ramy’s relatives to send him food and clothes after refusing to admit packages.

On 18 April 2020, a terrorism circuit in Cairo’s Criminal Court decided to arbitrarily include Ramy on Egypt’s “terrorist list” in his absence for a period of five years along with 12 other individuals including detained human rights lawyer and former parliamentarian Zyad el-Elaimy.

**I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Ramy Shaath as he is a prisoner of conscience whose detention stems solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and his right to participate in public affairs. I also call on you to ensure that all charges against him are dropped and the decision to include him on the “terrorist” list rescinded. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he and all others detained in Egypt have regular access to their families and lawyers.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 5 July 2019 at approximately 12:45 am, at least a dozen heavily armed police officers stormed the house of political activist Ramy Shaath in Cairo, without identifying themselves or presenting an arrest warrant. Police officers searched his house and seized computers, hard drives and mobile phones. They arrested both Ramy and his wife Céline Lebrun Shaath, a history teacher and community organizer, who was subsequently unlawfully deported to France on the same day, despite legally residing in Egypt since March 2012. Security forces transferred Ramy to an undisclosed location and concealed his whereabouts for about 36 hours. Police officers in the Qasr el-Nil police station, in Cairo, denied to Ramy's family and lawyer that he was in their custody. The family was later informed by a lawyer that Ramy appeared before a prosecutor at the Supreme State Security Prosecution in New Cairo. Ramy was not allowed to call his family or legal counsel and was represented during the interrogation session by a lawyer who happened to be present in the court building at the time.

According to the family, the prosecutor informed Ramy that he is accused of "aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals". However, he only questioned Ramy about the nature of his political activities in Egypt and did not provide any evidence against him. The prosecutor based his accusation on a secret file gathered by the National Security Agency (NSA), despite a 2015 decision by one of Egypt's top courts, the Court of Cassation, which ruled that NSA investigations do not constitute evidence on their own. Further, the prosecutor has not allowed Ramy or his lawyers to examine the NSA investigation file.

According to the authorities, the investigations in the case relate to a "plot by civil activists in cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood to undermine the state". The case includes people from across the political spectrum, who are not connected to one another. Amongst them are at least 15 politicians, students, journalists and labour rights activists who are arbitrarily detained over unfounded charges that relate to their legitimate political activities, human rights work, and the peaceful expression of their opinions. On 6 July 2019, the prosecutor ordered Ramy's detention for 15 days pending investigations and has since been renewing it every 15 days in automatic renewal hearings. Under Egypt's Code of Criminal procedures and the 2015 counter-terrorism law, prosecutors can issue pre-trial detention orders against individuals accused in "terrorism-related" cases for up to 150 days, without referring them to a judge.

Egypt has seen a rise in the number of detainees being held in pre-trial detention for months and sometimes years over terrorism-related charges, in many cases based on NSA investigations alone. Two months after the amendment of Law 8/2015 on Terrorist Entities and Terrorists in February 2020, a terrorism circuit in Cairo's Criminal Court included Ramy and 12 other individuals in Egypt's "terrorist" lists for five years. The recent amendments give the Public Prosecutor the power to submit to courts lists of entities and persons to be designated as "terrorists" regardless of whether an alleged "terrorist act" has actually occurred and based only on "police investigations or information". Ramy was added to the list without any hearings or due process. Ramy's inclusion on "terrorist" list for five years also leads to the imposition of travel bans and asset freezes, the seizure of his Egyptian passport and the prohibition of political activities as per article 7 of Law 8/2015. Ramy's lawyer appealed the court decision.

Ramy is a political activist, who has played an instrumental role in co-founding several secular political movements in Egypt, including the El-Dostour party, a political party founded by Mohammad ElBaradei in 2012. He is also the co-founder of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Egypt and has been its Egypt coordinator since 2015. The BDS movement campaigns to hold Israel accountable for human rights and other international law violations, using non-violent means. As part of his activism, Ramy raises public awareness about Palestinians' rights and has been vocal in the media in denouncing the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Prior to his arrest, he had participated in public events and gave media interviews in which he expressed his strong opposition to the US plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, known as the "deal of the century", and against Egypt's participation in the Manama meeting on 25-26 June 2019 aimed at discussing the plan. The Egyptian authorities have been harassing Ramy for years because of his political activism. In April 2012, the Ministry of Interior refused to renew his Egyptian passport in an attempt to deny him his Egyptian nationality. Although he won a case in 2013 before the Cairo Administrative Court, the Ministry of Interior appealed the verdict in 2018; the appeal is still pending.

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

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 19 August 2020.

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Ramy Shaath (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0993/2019/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0993/2019/en/)

**And copies to:**

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