

## African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

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## Press Release on the arrest and detention of Human Rights Defenders in Egypt

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa is deeply concerned about the arrest and detention of human rights defenders in Egypt, including **Sanaa Seif, Hanan Mustafa Mohamed, Salwa Mhriz, Samar Ibrahim, Rania El-Sheikh, Nahid Sherif, Fikreya Mohamed** and Yara Sallam, a winner of the human rights defenders' award for North Africa in October 2013.

Information received from reliable sources by the Special Rapporteur indicate that on 21 June 2014, the human rights defenders were arrested during a peaceful demonstration organized by Heliopolis in Cairo to register their protest against the law on public demonstration of November 2013 and to call for the release of all human rights activists detained in Egypt under the above-mentioned legislation.

The demonstrators were subjected to police brutality and a number of charges were brought against them, including, participation and organization of an unauthorized demonstration to prevent the implementation of the law and influence the effectiveness of public authorities in carrying out their work; participation in a demonstration which is a threat to public security and interests of citizens and undermines public and private transportation and safety of property. These human rights defenders have been kept in detention awaiting trial.

The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned about the fact that, in recent months, human rights activists in Egypt have been subjected to acts of intimidation and arbitrary arrests resulting in lengthy jail sentences. The Special Rapporteur strongly condemns the misuse of this law which is a stumbling block to the activities of human rights defenders.

The Special Rapporteur would like to remind the Egyptian Government about its obligations under the instruments duly ratified by the Arab Republic of Egypt which are the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 12 (2) of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which stipulates that « The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone, individually or in association with other persons against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration. »

The Special Rapporteur calls for the immediate release of the detained persons and urges the Egyptian Government to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the situation

The Special Rapporteur similarly would like to encourage the Egyptian authorities to continue with efforts to guarantee the right to freedom and physical integrity, particularly by bringing to an end the judicial harassment perpetrated against human rights defenders working in Egypt.

Finally, the Special Rapporteur expresses her continued availability and affirms her commitment to work with the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and other stakeholders on any issue relating to human rights defenders.

**Done in Banjul, 24 June 2014.**

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### Contact Us

31 Bijilo Annex Layout, Kombo North District  
 Western Region P.O. Box 673 Banjul  
 The Gambia  
 Tel: (220) 441 05 05, 441 05 06  
 Fax: (220) 441 05 04  
 E-mail: [au-banjul@africa-union.org](mailto:au-banjul@africa-union.org)  
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