

27 February 2020

Madam Rapporteur,

Warm greetings from **Nazra for Feminist Studies**. In response to your call on states and civil society groups and organizations to provide their views on the matter of violence against women journalists; the implications and systems leading to such practice(s); we want to draw your attention to two recent cases of women journalists in Egypt. In our view, those cases connect significantly with the subject matter of your inquiry, and offer -in themselves- material evidence on some of the alarming precedents (perhaps) on the growth of ill-treatment and violence against female professionals (journalists in this context) in a country that is witnessing sharp decline in civic and political space(s) such as Egypt.

**1. THE CASE OF JOURNALIST AND WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER (WHRD)
ESRAA ABDELFATTAH**

- Esraa AbdelFattah, female Egyptian journalist, activist, women's rights defender and Social Media Specialist was shortly disappeared on 12th October 2019 after plain-clothed armed men stopped her in the city of Cairo; detained and escorted her to unknown destination.
- Esraa was also a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She has been systematically targeted and harassed by the Egyptian authorities since 2014 through judicial harassment on the background of case 173/2011, commonly known as the "foreign funding" case and has been banned from travelling since 2015.
- Esraa whereabouts remained unknown until evening of 13th October 2019 evening, when she appeared before the State Security Prosecution. Her lawyers confirmed that she demanded an investigation of torture and abuse she was subjected to during the period in which she was forcefully disappeared.
- To protest lack of action on behalf of authorities to order investigation of torture and ill-treatment, Esraa conducted hunger strike for five days, starting from 13 October 2019; when she first appeared before Prosecution.
- Physical forensic examination has been conducted on Esraa to conclude signs of torture, but these conclusions were never brought up or included in her following Court sessions.

- She resumed hunger strike and remained until late November 2019, but while showing significant deteriorating health and psychological conditions. Esraa suspended her hunger strike for short periods or substituted full hunger strike with partial strike by consuming only water.
- Since her detention and arrest, the Supreme State Security Prosecutor kept renewing her detention each 15 days "pending investigation" (preventive or administrative detention. She is still detained until now.
- Charges against journalist Esraa are: 1) collaborating with a terrorist organization to achieve [its] goals, 2) spreading false news, 3) using social media to publish false rumors.

2. THE CASE OF JOURNALIST AND WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER (WHRD) SOLAFI MAGDY

- Solafa Magdy is a freelance journalist and reporter with assignments with Egyptian and regional networks and media outlets. A young journalist and human rights defender started working in 2010 in a number of Arab and Egyptian newspapers, and then moved to work between a producer and a news reporter with a number of channels like "25 TV", Eastern ", DW ", " Daily News Egypt ", " BBC ". In 2017 she founded the first school in Egypt to take care of mobile journalism for journalists / journalists and researchers / come and concerned / document. In 2019, she was selected as the only Arabic journalist out of 15 journalists / around the world who were selected for the U.N. general assembly.
- On 26 November 2019, she was arrested, her husband, journalist Hossam Al-Hunter, and her journalist "Mohamed Salah" while being in a Coffee Shop in Cairo.
- After their enforced disappearance for almost 24 hours, they showed up at Supreme State Security Prosecution and were all assigned to the Supreme State Security Case 488/2019.
- Solafa brought before Prosecution evidence that she was beaten and assaulted by National Security Agency officers right after she was arrested.
- She has also resorted to hunger strike to protest torture and ill treatment and conditions in jail. Her health, safety and well-being remain of great concern. But, to date, Egypt's authorities have not opened any investigation into ill-treatment she has

been subjected to and never questioned those who are responsible for torturing them in detention.

- The State Security Prosecutor charged her with “membership of a banned group and disseminating false news”.
- Since her detention and arrest, the Supreme State Security Prosecutor kept renewing her detention each 15 days “pending investigation” (preventive or administrative detention. She is still detained until now.

3. REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1. Cases Specific Remarks

- Harassment against the two Egyptian female journalists included forms of judicial harassment, smearing, intimidation and ill-treatment and torture while in custody.
- Their cases were closely followed by lawyers and civils society groups including Nazra. Documentation of her case took place through legal representation of lawyers; presenting appeals to Court and through civil society groups (such as Nazra) follow up.
- State response to complaints of torture and ill-treatment (let alone that it was agencies of the State that abducted and disappeared both of those journalists)- has been negative to significant extent(s). For instance, the Prosecution has never included torture claims in the Court case.
- There are indeed “brutal” practices rather than “Good” practices by the State in this context.

3.2. Overall Remarks

1. **Persecution and Prosecution of Women Journalists, Women Human Rights Defenders and Women Activists:** forcefully disappearing women journalists; women rights activists; kidnap and abduction by State organs representatives; unlawful arrests, detention, and subjecting certain leading figures of WHRDs to prolonged trials, sometimes for years.
2. **Torture:** in recent cases in Egypt, for instance, jailed women journalists, human rights defenders and/or activists presented credible claims of being subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment whether during detention or during investigation proceedings.

3. **Travel Bans and other forms of Severe Measures to Restrict WHRDs, Women Journalists and Activists** : in Egypt, the use of travel ban(s) and asset freeze, either of WHRDs or the organizations they lead or work with, has proven to be an instrumental tool to dismantle the energies, action and the contributions of WHRDS to human rights protection, advocacy and monitoring.
4. **Physical and Sexual Violence against WHRDs, Women Journalists and Women Activists**: in Egypt and other countries where Nazra is monitoring the situation of WHRDs and women activists; specifically, amidst conflict, unrest or revolutions/uprisings; chilling accounts of use of physical and sexual violence against women rights activists were monitored and observed.

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