



STATEMENT

Continuing the prosecution of Human Rights defenders in Egypt

A default judgement for 15 years as a sentence against Bahey Eldin Hassan

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The fifth circuit (terrorism) of Cairo Criminal Court which was held in the Institute of Police Secretaries in Tura, sentenced Bahey Eldin Hassan, Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), in absentia, to 15 years of prison on charges related to “spreading fake news”, “inciting hatred against the state” and “defaming the judiciary”, in case No. 5370 of 2020., Dokki criminal court, recorded no.91 of 2020 under the investigation of the State Security.

According to the statement issued by the Cairo Center, «Today’s judgment which was issued by a terrorism circuit, was based on the government’s exploitation of the Penal Code and the Anti-Cyber Crime Law to settle political scores.» Human rights organizations have previously warned of this. The ruling is also based on false and malicious accusations as evidence of indictment, such as “the use of social media to defame the judicial authority,” and “the dissemination of false news with the aim of harming the country’s economic position” and «disrupting the provisions of the constitution and law». The National Security Agency based their investigations of these fabricated charges on posts by Hassan on his social media accounts, and on his participation in international and United Nations meetings, and press conferences. These practices indicate that Egypt’s state security and judicial authorities view the platforms of defending human rights as a crime that must not be tolerated.

The judgement against «Hassan» is a continuation of the punitive approach against human rights defenders in Egypt as part of a series of measures aimed at restricting the activities of Egyptian civil society and closing the public sphere in front of its vivid political and social power. It is noteworthy that the judgement issued against the director of the Cairo Center is not the first of its kind recently

in the state's war against civil society organizations in Egypt. As on the 19th of September, Hassan was sentenced in absentia, to three years in prison in addition to a 20,000 Egyptian pound fine for insulting the judiciary. As well, a one-year prison sentence and a fine of 20,000 pounds was also issued against the former human rights lawyer and parliamentarian Ziyad Al-Alimi in Case No. 694 of 2020, based on a malicious report dating back to 2017, accusing him of insulting the President of the Republic in his interview on television with the British BBC channel, as well as dozens of decisions from the Public Prosecutor to seize funds and ban travel. With the continuation of the case No.173 of 2011, known as «foreign funding for organizations», which for the ninth year is still occupying the thinking of Egyptian human rights institutions without any development in that case except for more travel bans and the seizure of funds issued in turn against human rights defenders in Egypt.

DAAM center calls the Egyptian authorities to stop stalking the Egyptian human rights activists, politicians and to be abided by the provisions of the Egyptian constitution and international laws to safeguard the citizen's dignity and his normal right to find neutral and independent investigation bodies and fair trials.

This issue has become a reasonable doubt after the recent Judicial Authority Law and several decisions that have allowed the executive authority in Egypt to interfere in the work of the judicial authority to facilitate the issuance of politicized judgments which portends immense consequences for luring that authority which has a respect and reverence, into the political conflict between the executive authority and its opponents.

DAAM center indicates that this path portends further suppression against freedoms and sends a strong message to all human rights defenders that participating in public work shall not be allowed without full obligation to the ruling authorities' vision that do not accept any form of peaceful opposition. This action may open the door for extremist groups to attract more members who did not find a way for them through democratic means.

DAAM center requested the Attorney General and the Egyptian Judicial Authority to be away from participating in political conflicts, to not allow being used by the executive authority to strike opposition and human rights defenders, and to remember that they are the advocates of the people and not the authority.

DAAM Center stresses that the executive authority in Egypt needs reviewing its way of dealing with human rights defenders, especially that all their participation is in public work and in the development of the human rights situation in Egypt which are demands in conformity with the constitution and the law, and it is not possible to continue dealing with them only through the viewpoint of the security services .

DAAM also calls for the immediate dropping of those charges against activists, defenders, and civil society organizations especially human rights organizations in accordance with the international conventions and treaties ratified by successive Egyptian governments, and as well as the articles of the Egyptian constitution.

Finally, DAAM center confirms its full support for the human rights movement and civil society organizations in Egypt which are still insisting on playing their role and on their responsibilities in

spreading the principles and culture of human rights, and monitoring violations concerning human rights to enshrine the state of freedom, equality and upholding the rule of law.

