

URGENT ACTION

PRE-TRIAL DETENTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

On 9 February, a judge ordered the pre-trial detention of human rights defender and lawyer Ezzat Ghoniem for 45 days pending investigation. Ezzat Ghoniem and Azzoz Mahgoub were detained on March 1, 2018. The court ordered their release on probation on 4 September 2018, provided they report to a police station twice a week. They were never released, and on September 14 they were forcibly disappeared by the authorities. On 20 October 2018, an arrest warrant was issued against them for not respecting the probational terms – which they could not apply as being forcibly disappeared. Ezzat Ghoniem remained forcibly disappeared until February 9, when lawyers saw him at the Cairo Criminal Court. Azzoz Mahgoub is still held incommunicado.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 69.18**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Mr. Nabil Sadek

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Ambassador Yasser Reda

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Dear Counsellor,

On 9 February 2019, a judge ordered the pre-trial detention of human rights defender and lawyer Ezzat Ghoniem pending investigation in case 441/2018. On 1 March 2018, Ezzat Ghoniem and Azzoz Mahgoub were arrested on charges of "joining a banned group", "disseminating false news" and "providing international bodies with false information". Their 15-day detention kept on being renewed until 4 September 2018, when a court ordered their probational release, provided they report to a police station twice a week. They were never released, and on September 14, the National Security Agency officers forcibly disappeared them. As they could not observe their probational terms, an arrest warrant was issued against them on 20 October 2018, by the same judge that issued the latest order against Ghoniem. Ezzat Ghoniem's whereabouts were unknown until February 9, 2019, when lawyers saw him blindfolded and in a glass cage at the Cairo Criminal Court. Azzoz Mahgoub, remains in custody of the authorities and his fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

I urge you to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Ezzat Ghoniem and reveal the fate and whereabouts of Azzoz Mahgoub, as they have been detained solely for their peaceful human rights work and the exercise of their right to freedom of expression. I urge you to drop all the charges against them and ensure that, pending their release, Ghoniem and Mahgoub are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that their conditions of detention are in line with international standards. I urge to ensure that a prompt, independent, effective and impartial investigation is conducted into the circumstances surrounding Ghoniem's enforced disappearance from 14 September to 9 February, as well as Mahgoub's ongoing incommunicado detention, make the results public and ensure that all those suspected to be responsible for violating the detainees' rights are brought to justice in fair trials.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 March 2018, Egyptian authorities arrested Ezzat Ghoniem, the co-founder of the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms, on his way home in Giza. Security forces held him incommunicado for three days during which they denied his detention, and a state security prosecutor interrogated him without access to a lawyer. National Security Agency (NSA) officers filmed Ghoniem without his consent, and the Ministry of Interior later shared excerpts from the video on its Facebook page, claiming that Ghoniem was part of an organized “human rights terrorism” plot. The authorities also arrested human rights lawyer Azzoz Mahgoub on 1 March 2018. Azzoz Mahgoub is the lawyer for Mona Mahmoud, more commonly known as “Om Zubida,” who is currently detained following a video appearance on the BBC, in which she described the torture and enforced disappearance of her daughter. Mahgoub and Ghoniem were both held in the Tora prison complex pending investigations.

On 4 September 2018, a judge ordered their release under probation, which required reporting to a police station twice a week. However, the authorities kept both Ghoniem and Mahgoub in police custody and eventually put them in incommunicado detention on 14 September 2018. On 20 October 2018, the court issued an arrest warrant against the two defendants for failing to observe their probational terms. Ghoniem finally reappeared in court on 9 February, after almost four months of enforced disappearance. According to information received by Amnesty International, he was blindfolded and standing in a glass cage, wearing the same clothes he had on when he appeared in court earlier in September. Ghoniem told the court he was kept in a hidden place, prevented from contacting his lawyers and family, and was not informed of the reasons behind his illegal detention the entire time. He explained to court that he did not flaunt his probation terms but was in fact unable to observe them because of his detention. Nevertheless, the court ordered his detention for 45 days. The authorities have kept Azzoz Mahgoub in incommunicado detention and his fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

An enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention or abduction of an individual by state agents, or people acting with their authorization, support or acquiescence, followed by the refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the person’s fate or whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law. Enforced disappearances are crimes under international law.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 29 March 2019.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ezzat Ghoniem and Azzoz Mahgoub (him/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/9147/2018/en/>