

**BY AIRMAIL**

His Excellency Abdel Fattah el-Sisi  
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
Abedine Palace  
CAIRO  
**EGYPT**

8 December 2014

Subject: arrest and continued detention of human rights lawyer Yara Sallam

Your Excellency,

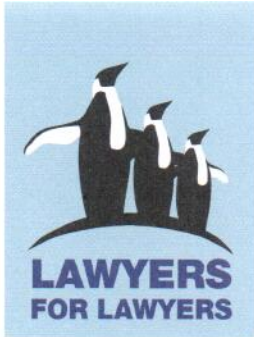
As the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation (*Stichting Advocaten voor Advocaten*), we hereby express our grave concerns about the arrest and continued detention of human rights lawyer Yara Sallam.

Yara Sallam is a prominent human rights lawyer in Egypt and the head of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, a human rights organisation that strengthens and protects basic rights and freedoms in Egypt through research, advocacy and litigation support. In 2013, Ms. Sallam received the North African Shield Human Rights Defender Award for her work in Egypt.

According to our information, Ms. Yara Sallam was arrested on 21 June 2014 in Cairo. Her arrest followed on the police's interference in a peaceful protest demanding the repeal of law 107 of 2013 (known as the "Anti-Protest Law"). While Ms. Sallam reportedly was in the vicinity, she did not participate in the protest. Still, she was arrested, together with over 20 activists.

Reports indicate that when she appeared in court a few days later, the trial was adjourned to 13 September 2014. Against the expectations of legal experts, Ms. Sallam was denied bail, and was subsequently moved to Qanater prison. Considering reports from human rights organisations of violence and abuse towards female prisoners in this prison, Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned about her physical and psychological well-being. Reportedly, the trial was adjourned on 13 September 2014 in a private hearing that Ms. Sallam was not allowed to attend. On 11 October, the trial was again adjourned to 16 October 2014. Ms. Sallam has remained in detention ever since her arrest on 21 June 2014.

Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned about reports indicating a lack of evidence and inconsistencies in police reports relating to the charges filed against Ms. Sallam. There is also concern that judicial authorities have been mishandling the case by drawing out the unwarranted detention of Ms. Sallam, and conducting private hearings, infringing upon her right to a fair trial.



We would like to draw your attention to the implementation of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. In particular in this case the applicability of paragraphs 16 and 17 of these Basic Principles. According to paragraph 16, the government is under an obligation *"to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference"*. Paragraph 17 states that *"where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities"*.

It follows from paragraph 23 that *"Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization."*

These principles are universally applicable. Therefore, your government is under an obligation to adequately protect and support its lawyers.

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urges you to:

- i. ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Ms. Yara Sallam, and to drop all charges against her;
- ii. ensure her personal and professional safety and to enable her to carry out her professional duties while not being intimidated, restricted or hindered in doing so.
- iii. guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights lawyers in Egypt are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

We would like to thank you for your attention for this very important matter. We are confident of your good will and sense of justice and will continue to closely monitor this case.

On behalf of the President of Lawyers for Lawyers, Phon van den Biesen,

Sincerely,

**Lawyers for Lawyers**

Adrie van de Streek

Executive Director of Lawyers for Lawyers