

23 March 2015

Update: a Prominent Egyptian Lawyer and Woman Human Rights Defender (WHRD) Azza Soliman Officially Declared a Defendant for Giving her Testimony on the Killing of WHRD Shaimaa ElSabbagh

On March 23, 2015, lawyers were able to obtain information about the names of defendants and charges they are accused of in the case related to the incident of killing WHRD Mrs. Shaimaa ElSabbagh. The list of defendants includes prominent Lawyer and Woman Human Rights Defender Mrs. Azza Soliman, who witnessed the killing of Mrs. ElSabbagh; Mrs. Nagwa Abbass (member of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party), in addition to 15 members of the aforementioned political party and other witnesses. They are charged with unauthorized protesting, and breach of security and public order in the case No. 2841/2015 Qasr El Nile felonies, where its first session is scheduled for Saturday, April 4, 2015 and will be taking place at `Abdeen Misdemeanor Court. The General Prosecutor charged as well the late WHRD Mrs. Shaimaa ElSabbagh in the same case but the charges were dropped due to her death.

The General Prosecutor released a statement on March 16, 2015 regarding the incident of killing WHRD Mrs. ElSabbagh, where he declared that the incident has been processed in 3 cases; the first case is accusing Yassin ElEmam - a police officer of the Central Security Forces - of assault resulting in death and deliberately attacking the other participants of the peaceful march; the second case is accusing General Rabie ElSawy – the Commander of the Police Forces - and a soldier of concealing evidence; while the third case is against members of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, and witnesses as mentioned above.

Mrs. Azza Soliman is the founder of the feminist pioneering NGO, Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA) and is currently serving as its Board of Trustees Head. She is also a prominent Lawyer and Women Human Rights Defender.

Background

On the eve of the fourth anniversary of the January 25th Revolution, woman human rights defender (WHRD), Mrs. Shaimaa El Sabbagh, was killed in Downtown – Cairo, while she was participating in a peaceful protest to commemorate the martyrs of the January 25th Revolution.

Around 20 to 40 members of the party were intercepted by security forces shortly after leaving the party's headquarters. The members of the party were marching in the peaceful protest, holding flowers and chanting "bread - freedom - social justice", as part of the commemoration process. The Secretary General of the party, Mr. Talaat Fahmy, who was also taking part in the concerned peaceful protest, approached the security forces to be granted permission for the march to pass through Talaat Harb Square to approach Tahrir Square. It is reported that moments after they had spoken to him as he walked back to the protest, security forces opened fire and started dispersing them. Ms. ElSabbagh was shot in the back by bird pellet shots, and the Forensic Medicine Administration autopsy report issued by the morgue stated that the cause for death was laceration of the lungs and heart that caused intensive bleeding in the chest, due to bird pellet shots that were shot at her in the back at close range. Ms. ElSabbagh was assisted by bystanders and members of the concerned party, where she was taken to Cairo Center for Kidney Diseases and died as a result of the injuries she sustained.

Nazra for Feminist Studies finds it extremely flabbergasting that the Egyptian Prosecution Office is directing charges at witnesses to the concerned incident, especially that these charges include demonstrating without permit and breach of security and public order, when for instance, Mrs. Soliman's testimony clearly outlines that she was not participating in the concerned protest. Nazra for Feminist Studies demands the immediate quashing of charges directed at witnesses.