

17 June 2016

Egypt - Court order to freeze assets of Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies and its director Ahmed Samih

On 13 June 2016, Cairo Criminal Court ordered to freeze the assets of the **Andalus Institute for Tolerance and anti-Violence Studies** and its director **Ahmed Samih** pending investigation, in the framework of the ongoing foreign funding case which resumed in March 2016. If they are charged with receiving foreign funding, the NGO will have to close and the human rights defender will face a heavy sentence under Article 78 and 98 of Egypt's penal code.

[Ahmed Samih](#) is an Egyptian human rights defender and the director of Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies (AITAS), a Cairo-based independent research institution established in 2004 and working on the documentation of human rights violations in Egyptian society and towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination through advocacy, legal aid, human rights education and media monitoring. He is also a journalist and director of Radio Horytna which broadcasts news about human rights and democracy issues in the MENA region.

On 13 June 2016, during the first hearing session, Cairo Criminal Court issued an order to freeze the assets of the Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Non-Violence Studies and of its director Ahmed Samih. The human rights defender was not officially informed of the hearing against him and the organisation, and only learned about it from the media. His defence team did not have the opportunity to examine the case and thus to prepare for the defence. He was accused of "using foreign funding to foment unrest." This is the first order which has been issued relating to the foreign funding case, following a series of summons targeting several heads of human rights organisations

On 29 March 2016, three staff members of the Andalus Institute were summoned to report to the investigating judge at the New Cairo Court regarding the foreign funding case, which was then postponed.

Forty-one Egyptian organisations have been included in the foreign funding case, also known as Case No.173, with some of their leaders and staff members being summoned on charges including "receipt of illegal foreign funding" and "working without legal permission". Between March and May 2016, human rights defenders Mr [Bahey Eldin Hassan](#), his wife and daughter, Mr [Mostafa Al Hassan](#), Mr [Abdel Hafez Tayel](#), Mr [Hossam Bahgat](#), and Mr [Gamal Eid](#) received [summons](#) to appear before the court following an order from the investigating judge to freeze their personal funds and family assets. On 23 May, Cairo Criminal Court postponed the asset freeze hearing of those HRDs to 17 July.

Front Line Defenders condemns the criminalisation of the work of human rights defenders in Egypt and calls for an immediate end to their persecution, reiterating the essential role of their work in the development of a just and equal society.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Put an end to the ongoing investigation against the above-mentioned human rights defenders and human rights organisations in Egypt, and drop all charges and measures, including the asset freezes, against the defenders and their families;
2. Immediately cease all harassment of human rights defenders in Egypt, as Front Line Defenders believes that their rights are being restricted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Egypt are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.