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EGYPT | Human Rights Defender Detained Longer

Egyptian human rights defender Mina Thabet, who was arrested May 19, was remanded in custody for an additional 15 days of preventative detention.

Thabet, who specializes in Coptic and Minority rights, was initially held for four days in preventative detention following his arrest at his home by plain-clothes police officers in the early hours of May 19.

On May 21, a renewal of detention session was held at the Misdemeanors Court of Ain Shams in Cairo where Thabet received an additional 15 days in detention. He faces charges of belonging to a terrorist group, inciting violence and public assembly, spreading fabricated information for terrorist purposes, inciting attacks on police stations and the possession of leaflets undermining national security and the ruling regime. The evidence for these charges includes an introductory paper about Egypt's Bread and Freedom party, a notebook containing pictures of the Virgin Mary and papers from Thabet's work on the rights of religious minorities.

The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), where Thabet is the Director of the Minority and Religious Groups Program, reported that during his arrest, police broke into his house, destroyed property belonging to his family and after searching the property, confiscated papers belonging to Thabet without providing a search warrant or an arrest warrant. The ECRF also reported that Thabet was assaulted by police officers in front of his family and blindfolded before being put in an unmarked car and taken to an undisclosed location. When he was finally located by colleagues, Thabet was not allowed access to legal representation until noon, violating both the Egyptian constitution and legal stipulations.

On the same day and during the same court session, Ahmad Abdallah, the President of the ECRF who faces the same charges as Thabet, was also sentenced to an additional 15 days detention.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "The renewal and

extension of Mr. Thabet's period in detention is very disappointing and we are deeply concerned by the allegations that have come to light regarding the manner of his arrest. The violence reportedly utilized by arresting officers and the extended preventative detention once again highlight the severity of the ongoing crackdown on civil society and human rights defenders. We state once again that human rights defenders are not the government's enemies; they are part of the necessary checks and balances for a just and equitable society and accountable governance. We urge the authorities to ensure that both Mr. Thabet and Mr. Abdallah receive due process and call for the exaggerated charges filed against them to be dropped. We also call once again for the authorities to adhere to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which Egypt supported in 1998, which says that States should guarantee the rights of individuals, including in association with others, to promote and protect fundamental freedoms, which is all that Mr. Thabet and his colleagues are doing."