

**Center for Human Rights & Global Justice Welcomes Release of Egyptian Activist Hossam Bahgat**  
*Calls for Withdrawal of Charges, Reform of Security Laws*

(New York—November 11, 2015) The NYU Center for Human Rights and Global Justice today called for the withdrawal of any charges against Hossam Bahgat, a prominent Egyptian human rights activist and journalist, who was detained on Sunday, November 8 and held for two days, apparently in retaliation for an investigative article he wrote concerning the military. Welcoming Bahgat’s release, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice condemned his detention as an attack on freedom of expression.

Bahgat founded the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights in 2002. The organization has since become one of the most well-respected human rights groups in Egypt. In recognition for his pioneering advocacy, Mr. Bahgat received the Alison Des Forges Award from Human Rights Watch in 2010. In 2011, Mr. Bahgat spoke during the [Emilio Mignone Lecture on Transitional Justice](#) at NYU School of Law. His remarks recounted the promise of the Egyptian Revolution, and the hard work ahead. Since that time, the Egyptian government has arbitrarily detained and prosecuted many dissenting civilians, including prominent journalists and activists, often bringing those civilians before military courts.

Hossam Bahgat’s freedom remains under threat. Military prosecutors are reportedly investigating Mr. Bahgat for alleged violations of the Egyptian penal code, which criminalizes “deliberately spreading false information with the purpose of harming public order or public interest” and “publishing, with malicious intent, false news that is likely to disturb public order.” Those provisions threaten the right to freedom of expression due to their overly broad and vague nature, and have been used by the Egyptian authorities to target individuals who take a critical stance towards the government. The charges against Mr. Bahgat are emblematic of growing restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of the press in Egypt, illustrated by the passage earlier this year of two purportedly “counter-terrorism” laws with rights-restricting provisions. In addition, late last year President Abdelfattah al-Sisi expanded the jurisdiction of military courts to allow military prosecution of all crimes occurring on “public and vital” property. The exercise of military jurisdiction over civilians is a breach of Egypt’s human rights obligations under international law.

“Far from preserving Egyptian national security, the detention of journalists and human rights defenders like Hossam Bahgat threatens Egyptian society,” said Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, a Faculty Director of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. “We call for any charges against him to be unconditionally withdrawn, and for his rights to be fully protected.”