

Biography of Mohamed Zaree

Mohamed Zaree, Egypt Office Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).

Within the context of the renewed crackdown on Egyptian human rights organizations (<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=10298&lang=en>), Mr Zaree has become a leading protagonist of Egypt's human rights movement since assuming responsibility as CIHRS' Egypt Office Director in 2014 when the institute's headquarters relocated to Tunis. He is currently facing investigation under the Foreign Funding Case no. 173/2011 and at is at high risk of prosecution and life imprisonment.

The Egyptian government has been escalating its policy of eradicating the independent human rights movement in Egypt. Human rights NGOs and defenders are confronted with a growing wave of legal and non-legal threats, harassment and intimidation. Despite this peril, Mr. Zaree is leading CIHRS' research, human rights education, and national advocacy initiatives in Egypt as well as shaping the media debate¹ on critical human rights issues. Carrying forward CIHRS philosophy, he believes in the collective work of Egyptian NGOs. Mr. Zaree leads the Forum of Independent Egyptian Human Rights NGOs, a network created in 2007 that brings human rights groups together in Egypt. During a critical period to the survival of civil society, Mr. Zaree is leading the Forum of Independent Egyptian Human Rights NGOs, empowering its members unite their efforts to have a prevailing impact on vital human rights issues.

In addition, Mr. Zaree has been a key focal point for several national and international actors on the question of freedom of association in Egypt. He represented CIHRS in official committees charged with drafting a new NGO law for Egypt since 2012, and advocated for the freedom of association with different ministries under the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), and the presidencies of Mohammad Morsi and Adly Mansour presidencies. He also spoke and engaged in debates in the Egyptian Parliament about the very restrictive NGO law currently in force (Law 84/2002)., Alongside this case, Mr. Zaree leads the Institute in researching and advocating on cases centered on NGOs and human right defenders, including the Assembly Law and Aya Hegazy cases. Hegazy, founder of Belady Foundation, was recently found not guilty after three years of pretrial detention.

Being at the forefront in the battle against human rights violations in Egypt, Mr. Zaree's role and that of CIHRS was not welcomed by Egypt's repressive government. On May 26, 2016 Zaree was stopped at the Cairo International Airport and informed that a travel ban had been imposed on him, based on an order by the investigative judge in case no. 173/2011, the so-called NGO "Foreign Funding Case." To his knowledge, he was then the seventh human rights defender and rights activist in Egypt to be banned from traveling outside Egypt based on this case, which is the centerpiece of state repression of Egypt's human rights movement.

He then stated,

¹ For Mr. Zaree's media quotations, kindly check the annex attached at the end of the biography

“I stand in the company of brave, steadfast individuals whose only crime has been to strive for basic freedom through peaceful means. (...) We have refused to give up. We understand increasing repression undermines the short-term stability of Egypt, and bodes ill for the future of our country.”

In case no. 173/2011, the NGOs’ actions being investigated are simply their human rights operations. Among the charges listed in case documents are some under Article 78 of Egypt’s Penal Code (amended by President al-Sisi in September 2014), which carries a sentence of life imprisonment for receiving funds from abroad for very vaguely-worded purposes of *“pursuing acts harmful to national interests or destabilizing general peace or the country’s independence and its unity, or committing hostile acts against Egypt or harming security and public order.”* CIHRS’s assets in Egypt, and those of its Director Bahey el din Hassan—long since relocated abroad for security reasons?????. The assets of 2 other rights NGOs and 4 other leading Egyptian human right defenders, were frozen on Sept. 17, 2016 by a judge following a request by an investigative judge on the case.

Mohamed Zaree completed his undergraduate studies at Cairo University’s Faculty of Law in 2002. He earned a graduate diploma in Civil Society and Human Rights in 2004 from the University’s Faculty of Economics and Political Science. Mr. Zaree then worked with a number of international and Egyptian non-governmental organizations, including United Group, Nazra for Feminist Studies and the Catholic Relief Services. In 2011, he joined the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies as its Egypt Program Director.

Mr. Zaree remains present and active in Egypt and the main figurehead of CIHRS inside the country.

Mohamed Zaree’s engagement in national and international media.

- Madamasr - [Parliament approves secretly drafted NGO law](#)
- Madamasr - [2011 NGO case reopened against Hossam Bahgat, Gamal Eid and others](#)
- Front Line Defenders – [Travel Ban: Case History, Mohamed Zaree](#)
- Reuters - [Egypt rights activist says banned from travel](#)
- Reuters - [Law used to imprison Egyptians draws scrutiny](#)
- The New York Times - [Egyptian President Vows Swifter Justice for Terrorists After Assassination](#)
- The New York Times - [Death of a Student, Giulio Regeni, Highlights Perils for Egyptians, Too](#)
- IFEX - [What's in the cards for Egypt's independent NGOs?](#)
- Associated Press: [Egypt passes new law clamping down on rights groups](#)
- Associated Press: [Middle East Extra Egypt NGO Laws](#)
- Associated Press TV:: [Human rights organisation says NGO law is a 'declaration of war'](#)
- Fox News: [Egypt's rights groups, civil society fear being silenced under heavier restrictions](#)
- Foreign Policy: [Egypt’s Bloody Purge Is Just Beginning](#)
- Ahram Online: [Employee of Cairo rights NGO turned away from airport due to travel ban](#)