



ISHR defends those who defend rights, ensuring that the United Nations remains a place where truth can still be told.

BASMA MOSTAFA

Basma Mostafa is an Egyptian journalist and woman human rights defender forced into exile after reporting on enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings in Egypt.

Basma's story demonstrates how speaking truth to power can come at significant personal risk.

After being detained for her work as an investigative journalist by the Egyptian government, she left Egypt in 2020 with her two daughters. Even in exile, she continues to be targeted with threats, surveillance and even physical assault.

But Basma doesn't let herself get discouraged. While in Berlin, she co-founded the organisation Law and Democracy Support Foundation e.V., promoting the rule of law and democracy in Egypt, and providing support to exiled human rights defenders and journalists at risk like herself.

How does ISHR support Basma?

ISHR supported Basma's pursuit of justice for the threats that have followed her from home to exile.

ISHR's presence in Geneva meant that Basma's story could be brought into the heart of the UN human rights system. We provided:

- Training: Basma participated in ISHR's [Human Rights Advocacy Programme \(HRDAP\)](#)., gaining additional tools and knowledge on the international system, complementing her skillset to reach her advocacy goal.
- Advocacy support and documentation: Basma's experiences of transnational repression (TNR) were documented and raised with UN Special Procedures.

As a result

Five UN Special Rapporteurs wrote a letter to the governments of Egypt, Germany and Switzerland concerning her case. In April 2025, Germany's Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights [publicly condemned](#) the acts of intimidation Basma faced and urged the Egyptian government to respond.

In addition, Basma and ISHR's work contributes to strengthening the international system.

ISHR works with Basma and her organisation to push forward the recognition of transnational repression as a concerning human rights trend, contributing to strengthened international standards that could help Basma access justice for the violations she has faced.

We also push for structural changes by urging States to publicly denounce, investigate and address transnational repression; establish protection and rapid response mechanisms for defenders; implement digital safety protocols; and refrain from providing States with the tools of transnational repression (e.g. spyware, arms).

As Basma herself said:

'When safety becomes conditional, so does democracy. We don't need more praise - we need protection. We don't need to be admired for our resilience - we need systems that prevent the violence in the first place. It is time to stop asking survivors to carry the burden of proof. It is time to ask: what will you do, now that you know?'

By donating to ISHR, you can help ensure that defenders like Basma are seen, heard and protected - and that the system which allows truth to be told and rights to be upheld is strengthened globally.



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