

PRESS RELEASE

Paris, April 8, 2019

Alaa al-Aswany, author of the « Yacoubian Building », calls upon the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and the protection of freedom of expression to end persecution against him.

François Zimeray, Matthias Fekl and Jessica Finelle submitted an allegation letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of expression to decry Alaa al-Aswany's fate in Egypt.

Banned from publishing his books for the past 5 years, Alaa al-Aswany is being prosecuted since March 14, 2019 by the Egyptian Military Prosecutor for "insulting the President of the Republic, the armed forces and judicial institutions". The Military Prosecutor's Office's accusations are based on the content of his latest book, *The Republic As If*, as well as on his articles published in Deutsche Welle Arabic.

Alaa Al-Aswany can no longer travel to Egypt without being arrested and brought before the Egyptian military judge for having exercised his freedom of expression and opinion. He also fears the fate of his family members, all living in Egypt.

In the allegation letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of expression in Geneva, François Zimeray, Jessica Finelle and Matthias Fekl denounced the flagrant violation of a fundamental right, such as freedom of expression and opinion, by the Egyptian authorities.

According to François Zimeray, *"the hopes raised during the Egyptian spring have died, these prosecutions are like a sarcophagus of freedoms »*. The criminal proceedings against Alaa al-Aswany are « *only a disguised means of intimidating the writer and depriving the Egyptian people of Alaa al-Aswany's fierce and modern prose »*.

According to **Matthias Fekl**, « *the freedom of speech is recognized by numerous international conventions ratified by the Arab Republic of Egypt. Alaa al-Aswany is a writer whose magnificent work is read in the whole world, and an intellectual with a strong commitment for the universal ideals expressed during the Egyptian spring »*.

Alaa Al-Aswany, 61, is a world-renowned Egyptian writer who now lives in the United States where he teaches literature. Born in Cairo, he attended high school in a French-speaking Egyptian high school and also studied dental surgery in the United States. He regularly contributes to opposition newspapers and is close to left-wing intellectuals, in particular Sonallah Ibrahim. He is one of the founding members of the opposition movement "Kifaya" (That's enough) created in 2004, which called for free presidential

elections and opposed President Hosni Mubarak's attempts to have his son Gamal as successor. This movement was one of the pillars of Tahrir Square during the eighteen days that brought down the Raïs.

His novel *The Yacoubian Building*, published in 2002, was an international success. As a publishing phenomenon in the Arab world, it was translated into 37 languages, sold in millions of copies and was adapted in movies in 2006. It sets the abundant life of a once grandiose building in downtown Cairo, where residents face the oppressive corruption of the regime and the rise of Islamist pressure. He then wrote his novel *Chicago*, published in 2006, which depicts the lives of Arab students in the United States after the events of September 11, 2001. This book was also a huge sales success.

In his novel *J'ai couru vers le Nil*, published in 2018, banned in Egypt and all Arab countries except Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, Alaa al-Aswany revives the heroes and executioners of the 2011 revolution in Tahrir Square in Cairo.

For such procedure, Alaa al-Aswany is represented by **Zimeray & Finelle Avocats** and Matthias Fekl, partner at **KGA Avocats**.

The Zimeray & Finelle Law firm

Zimeray & Finelle combines expertise in complex legal challenges with international diplomacy, offering clients unique, tailor-made legal services, and specialises in international human rights (including corporate compliance), transnational crime, and conflict resolution.

The KGA Law Firm

KGA was founded in the 1970's by Theo Klein. It is active in France, Europe and worldwide. Our lawyers have varied profiles and experiences and offer our clients expertise in numerous fields of public and private law. KGA is member of the Pangea network, active in more than 30 countries around the world.

About François Zimeray

Francois Zimeray is an international lawyer, formerly serving as the French Human Rights Ambassador-at-large, the French Ambassador in Denmark and as a Member of the European Parliament. Called to the Paris Bar in 1987, Francois Zimeray has extensive experience dealing with complex international legal challenges, for individuals, corporations and governments. Previously, François was a partner in a leading Paris law firm where, for 20 years, he advised and assisted corporations on transnational commercial disputes both in litigation and arbitration. In September 2018, he partnered with Jessica Finelle, lawyer since 2009, specializing in international criminal law, to create Zimeray & Finelle law firm.

At the same time, he joined the prestigious human rights law firm Doughty Street Chambers as associate tenant.

François Zimeray is the author of « J'ai vu partout le même visage », published by Plon in 2016.

About Jessica Finelle

Jessica Finelle, lawyer at the Paris Bar and partner at Zimeray & Finelle, specializes in international criminal law and human rights law. She has recently obtained a decision from independent UN experts, asserting that the detention of Général Mokoko, Congolese main opposition leader to President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, was arbitrary, calling for his immediate release and reparation of his prejudice.

About Matthias Fekl

Matthias Fekl has been active in French and European public life at different levels over the last years. He is a graduate of Sciences Po, Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Arts and Humanities, and Ecole Nationale de l'Administration (ENA). He has taught public law at Sciences-Po in Paris and Bordeaux, published several legal articles and co-authored a current textbook on public law. He became a lawyer at the Paris Bar on 14 March 2018 and associate partner at KGA Avocats.

Press Contact :

Laurence Martin

Corporate Communication & Press relations

Mobile : +33 (0) 6 47 69 85 99

E-mail : lm@zimerayfinelle.com