**A joint statement recognizing the first anniversary of the death of lesbian activist Sarah Hegazi and announcing the inauguration of a Pride Day for Lesbian and Queer Women from the Middle East and North Africa.**

**‎First Annual MENA Lesbian and Queer Women’s Pride Day in honor of Sarah Hegazi**

The movements and organizations that have joined in signing this statement support the honoring of Sarah Hegazi’s memory by adopting the thirteenth of June each year as a day of pride for lesbian and queer women from the Middle East and North Africa.

**“MENA Lesbian and Queer Women’s Pride Day”**

Sunday, June 13th

**Sarah Hegazi**, a lesbian political activist, was born in Egypt in 1989. In 2017, Sarah was arrested and imprisoned for three months after appearing in public waving the rainbow flag that symbolizes the 2SLGBTQIA+ community around the world at a Mashrou’ Leila concert in Cairo. As a result of bullying and social ostracism as well as the physical and psychological abuse and torture endured in prison, Sarah suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). After she was forced to leave Egypt for Canada, her suffering was only exacerbated by feeling the pain of exile, loneliness, and loss there.

‎On the morning of June 13th, 2020, Sarah chose to leave our world, putting an end to her pain after all the oppression, injustice, hatred, discrimination, and torture that she was subjected to.

Her tragic life and death have made Sarah Hegazi an icon of struggle and a symbol of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community around the world. Her photos have been raised and ceremonies to celebrate in life and death were held in more than 20 cities around the world, from Beirut to New York and passing through Naples.

**Sarah’s** departure in this way, and the bullying and abuse she has been subjected to, even after her death, help shed much-needed light on what the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is exposed to in the Middle East and North Africa, especially lesbian, queer and trans women, and it has given great momentum to the queer movement in the region. Following her death, a global movement of support and international solidarity was launched to support the LGBTQIA+ community in the Middle East and North Africa.

**On the first anniversary of Sarah Hegazi's death**, and in memory of her life, a group of lesbian and queer feminist activists are launching the "MENA Lesbian and Queer Women’s Pride Day" to be an annual celebration of Sarah Hegazi's struggles that will be repeated on the anniversary of her death - the thirteenth of June.

**On MENA Lesbian and Queer Women’s Pride Day**, we invite you to shine a light on lesbian, queer, and transgender women in our societies, highlighting lesbian, queer, and transgender women in our societies, challenging patriarchal dominions and cisgender guardianship, Much progress has been achieved in LGBTQIA+ mobilization in the Middle East and North Africa but the path towards justice, equality and safety remain long and treacherous.

**On this day**, let us remember Sarah Hegazi and all the women fighters we have lost on this path, and let us stand in solidarity with the millions of lesbians, queer, transgender, sex workers, women of color, migrants, refugees, precarious workers, unpaid housewives who are deprived of equal opportunities, queer mothers who provide for their children, and all those who are forced into heterosexual marriages due to societal pressure.

**‎To you, we say “This is your day”.**

Let us celebrate and the visibility of lesbian and queer women in the Middle East and North Africa, and let that day be an eternal commemoration of lesbian activist **Sarah Hegazi.**

**In honor of Sarah’s** free-flying spirit, the one who “wants the sky, not the Earth”, please join us to celebrate this day.

**Signatories:**

1. ANKH (Arab Network for Knowledge about Human rights) - Euromediterranean region
2. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement (HuMENA Regional) - MENA Region
3. Democracy Without Borders - Germany/South Africa
4. Women's center for guidance and legal awareness - Egypt
5. Le village médical et psychosocial - Morroco
6. My Kali magazine - MENA Region
7. Mawjoudin for Equality - Tunisia
8. Initiative franco-égyptienne pour les droits et les libertés (IFEDL) - France
9. Il Grande Colibrì ODV - Italy
10. ADLI Tunisian association defending individual liberties - Tunisia
11. LGBT Arabic - Syria
12. Egyptian Human Rights Forum - Egypt
13. Rural Infrastructure and Human Resources Development Organisations - Pakistan (KP)
14. ATP+ - Tunisia
15. Nassawiyat - Morocco
16. LGBT+ Denmark
17. Elcena Jeffers Foundation - UK
18. Association For Promotion Sustainable Development - India
19. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) - MENA region
20. Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms- Tunisia
21. Rainbow Railroad - International
22. Freedom House - USA
23. Transat Collective - MENA region
24. Barra Alsour Initiative - Egypt
25. Wassla Initiative - France
26. Damj Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality -Tunisia
27. Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association (FHRRDA) - Pakistan
28. Outcast - Tunisia
29. Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW)- Canada
30. Rainbow Egypt - Egypt
31. Santé des MigrantEs - France/ Europe
32. Helem - Lebanon/MENA
33. Innovation for Change - East Asia
34. OutRight Action International - International
35. Alouen - Algeria
36. Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN) - MENA Region
37. Kind Space - Canada
38. TOFIL association- Tunisia
39. Bedayaa Organization - Egypt and Sudan