Thank you, Madam President,

My name is Céline Lebrun Shaath. I'm a human rights defender and the Egyptian-Palestinian rights advocate and prisoner of conscience Ramy Shaath.

On the night of July 5th 2019, Egyptian state security stormed our house in Cairo, abducted my husband, and deported me illegally. Since that night, our family has endured 727 long days of pain and injustice. Ramy was forcibly disappeared, interrogated without his lawyer, and added to Egypt's so called “terrorist list.” Since then, his pre-trial detention has been renewed 25 times without justification or evidence. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has ruled his detention illegal.

Unfortunately, Ramy is not alone. He shares a small cell with nine other political prisoners, and is joined by thousands of arbitrarily detained citizens across the Egyptian prison system. Ramy is part of the “Hope case,” a group of rights defenders imprisoned for nothing more than daring to call for democracy and to hope for a better future.

In 72 hours my husband will have surpassed the maximum of two years in pre-trial detention allowable under Egyptian law. Two years! He should not have spent a single night in prison.

Madam Special Rapporteur, I still hope that the UN and its member states will hold Egypt accountable and ensure the release of Ramy and the many others like him.

Dissent is not terrorism. It is the beating heart of democracy. And hope is not a crime.

Thank you.