

URGENT ACTION

HOUSING RIGHTS RESEARCHER IN DETENTION

On 26 November 2019, Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, a housing rights researcher with the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), appeared at the Supreme State Security Prosecution in Cairo after 167 days of enforced disappearance since his arrest at his home in Moqattam, Cairo, on 11 June 2019.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Madinat al-Rehab
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2577 4716
E-mail: m.office@ppo.gov.eg

Dear counsellor,

On 26 November 2019, researcher Ibrahim Ezz El-Din was brought to the Supreme State Security Prosecution, after 167 days of enforced disappearance. The prosecutor questioned Ibrahim Ezz El-Din in the presence of his lawyers, on accusations of “contributing to the achievement of the objectives of a terrorist group” and “publication of false information undermining national security”. He was assigned to case 488/2019 of the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which relates to the anti-government protest in March 2019. Lawyer and WHRD Mahienour el-Masry, and human rights defender and journalist Esraa Abdelfattah are also among the defendants. Ibrahim was also questioned about his human rights work and no evidence was presented against him. Neither Ibrahim nor his lawyers were allowed to examine the National Security Agency (NSA) investigation casefile against him. Despite being in state custody since 11 June 2019, the NSA stated that he was arrested on 25 November 2019 and denied that he had been forcibly disappeared. His lawyers contested the date, stating the actual date of his arrest.

Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, who appeared weak and having lost much weight, told the prosecutor that he was tortured during his detention to extract information about his relationship to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), and about ECRF's work. He also told the prosecutor he had been kept in inhumane and degrading conditions of detention, at several security agency locations. The prosecutor ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigations. The location of his current detention remains unknown to us.

I urge you to release Ibrahim Ezz El-Din immediately and unconditionally. His detention is arbitrary as it relates to his peaceful human rights work. I call on you to also ensure that, pending his release, he is granted access to his lawyer and family, and that he is protected from torture, other ill-treatment and inhumane conditions of detention. I also urge you to open an investigation into his enforced disappearance and the torture he has been subjected to and to bring all those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ibrahim is a researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), where he focuses on the right to housing. He has been investigating access to safe and affordable housing, documenting forced evictions and Egypt's urban planning policies. On the night of 11 June 2019, plainclothes Egyptian security forces arrested Ibrahim Ezz El-Din. He was taken from the street in the area where he lives in Moqattam, Cairo, and has been forcibly disappeared since then. Following his arrest, his family and lawyers have enquired about him at the Moqattam police station, but the authorities denied that he is in their custody. The family and lawyers also sent a telegram (a postal message) to the Public Prosecutor and filed a complaint regarding his disappearance.

He is the fifth person affiliated with ECRF to have been arrested since 2016. His arrest follows the recent detention of labour rights lawyer Haytham Mohamdeen, who works at ECRF and who has been in pre-trial detention since 13 May 2019 in an unfounded case on charges of "aiding a terrorist group". In May 2018, Egyptian security forces had arrested Amal Fathy, a human rights defender and wife of the Executive director of ECRF and former Amnesty International Researcher Mohamed Lotfy, over a video where she criticized the authorities' failure to address rampant sexual harassment, before releasing her in December 2018. They had also previously arrested Minorities Programme Director Mina Thabet and board head Ahmed Abdallah back in 2016, before releasing them both without charges.

Ibrahim's arrest comes amid a human rights crisis and crackdown on Egypt's civil society that has led to the arrest of hundreds over their legitimate work or peaceful expression or assembly. The crackdown has affected journalists, football fans, critics, politicians and staff of civil society organizations. Many of those arrested have been apprehended and subjected to enforced disappearances, before being charged with unfounded "terrorism" charges relating to their legitimate work, and then being held in pre-trial detention for months or years, without ever being referred to trial. (see www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/1399/2019/en/)

Amnesty International has extensively documented Egyptian security forces' use of enforced disappearances as a tool against political activists and protesters, including students and children in Egypt (see www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/4368/2016/en/). Hundreds of people forcibly disappeared were arbitrarily arrested and held incommunicado in secret detention with no access to their lawyers or families and no external judicial oversight. This pattern of abuse became particularly evident after President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi appointed Major-General Magdy Abd el-Ghaffar as Minister of Interior in March 2015. ECRF is one of the main Egyptian NGOs that has been working extensively on the issue of enforced disappearances.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PROFFERED PRONOUN: Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (He/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0785/2019/en/>