

URGENT ACTION

STUDENT WITH DISABILITY DETAINED

Student Israa Al-Taweel, injured by a bullet wound at a protest, has been detained on accusations that include “belonging to a banned group” and “broadcasting false news”. She may not be able to walk again unless she can continue her physiotherapy treatment.

Student **Israa Al-Taweel**, aged 23, was arrested on 1 June, with two of her friends, and taken to the National Security (NS) Department in central Cairo. She was held incommunicado for 15 days: she was blindfolded on arrival, and questioned for at least 10 hours about her connections with the Muslim Brotherhood, relationship with her two friends, how she became paralyzed and why she had been protesting. The NS officers said they would arrest her sisters and parents unless she gave them the information they wanted. While she was being questioned, she heard her two friends screaming: the NS officers told her she would face the same fate unless she co-operated. Israa Al-Taweel was transferred on 15 June to the State Security Prosecutor’s office in Cairo, where she was questioned for 18 hours, without her lawyer present, about accusations that included “belonging to a banned group” and “broadcasting false news” as she had been carrying a camera when she was arrested. The prosecutor ordered her detention for 15 days: she was transferred the next day to Al-Qanater prison, where she is now held.

Her family told Amnesty International that following her arrest they had looked for her in police stations, courts and prisons for 16 days but the authorities denied she was in their custody. The family has since filed a complaint with the prosecutor’s office that she has been subjected to an enforced disappearance. Around 25 armed men from the security forces went to Israa Al-Taweel’s family house on 18 June at around 1.30am. They did not have a prosecutor’s permission to search the house but they searched her room and confiscated five laptops. Her lawyers have not yet had access to her casefile. Israa Al-Taweel was shot in her lower back on 25 January 2014, at a protest on the third anniversary of the uprising that overthrew Hosni Mubarak. It damaged nerves in her spinal cord and left her unable to walk and needing to use a wheelchair. Her condition improved with physiotherapy and she started to walk using crutches. She has now told her family that in custody her condition is deteriorating, as she is not being treated.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to release Israa Al-Taweel unless she is charged with a recognizable criminal offence, and ensure that if legitimate accusations are brought against her they do not use against her “evidence” or statements obtained while she was held incommunicado and without her lawyer present;
- Calling on them to grant her access to any medical attention she may require, including physiotherapy;
- Urging them to grant her lawyers access to the casefile, so they can prepare her defence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 OCTOBER 2015 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Magdy Abdel Ghaffar
Ministry of the Interior
25 El Sheikh Rihan Street
ab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 794 5529

Salutation: Dear Minister

Public Prosecutor

Deputy Public Prosecutor Ali Omran
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House, 1 “26 July” Road
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716
+202 2 575 7165

(switched off after office hours, GMT+2)

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign
Affairs for Human Rights
Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2 574 9713
Email: Contact.Us@mfa.gov.eg

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Egyptian police arrested Israa Al-Taweel alongside two of her friends, named Sohaib Saad and Omar Mohamed Ali, who were held in the NS office for three days and then transferred to the custody of Military Intelligence where they allege they were subjected to interrogation and torture. They are now on trial with 14 others before a military court.

Israa Al-Taweel told her family that for 15 days in the NS office she was kept blindfolded even when she was using the toilet and while eating. They only removed the blindfold when she went to bed at night. She also said she could hear people being tortured in the cells near her for the entire 15 days in the NS office.

Israa's family told Amnesty International that after Israa disappeared, they asked about her in different police stations including Al Maadi and Kasr Elnile police stations in Cairo. They also asked in the headquarters of the prison authorities in Al-Galaa office in Cairo. The authorities denied that she was being held in any police station or prison and informed the family that her name was not registered with them. Her family submitted a complaint to the Public Prosecutor on 3 June 2015 that she had been subjected to enforced disappearance. They also complained to the Human Rights Department within the Ministry of Interior, which denied that Israa was in the authorities' custody. Eventually, they submitted a report to the National Council for Human Rights. Her family only knew where she was after she was transferred to Al-Qanater prison on 16 June. Someone who saw her in the prison called the family and told them that she was there. Her family went to the prison to see her on 17 June, but the authorities refused to let them see her, though they did confirm that she was in the prison and in their custody. The family are able to visit her in Al-Qanater prison, but always with a female soldier present. This violates the right to privacy during prison visits.

A new wave of arrests that began in mid-2015 has seen the security forces arrest dozens of people and detain them incommunicado for prolonged periods, in conditions that in some cases may amount to enforced disappearance. The activist group Freedom for the Brave has reported that it has documented over 160 such cases since April 2015, with these people's families and lawyers unable to establish contact with them.

Those targeted have included several activists from the 6 April Youth Movement, which emerged some years before the 2011 uprising and whose members had called for a general strike on 11 June 2015. The Muslim Brotherhood separately reported that the security forces had been arresting their supporters and detaining them incommunicado. Those who have later been referred to the Public Prosecution have been charged with belonging to a banned group, as the judiciary had outlawed the 6 April Youth Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Amnesty International has documented an increase in the number of people subjected to enforced disappearance since the beginning of 2014. Many have been abducted from their homes, the streets or their workplaces across the country by heavily armed security force teams, generally comprising men in black uniform, some in balaclavas, as well as men in civilian clothes. Relatives present during the "arrests" have said these men broke into their homes in the middle of the night, confiscated laptops and mobile phones, stole money and other valuables, and in some cases assaulted those inside physically and verbally. In all cases, the security forces refused to say where and why they were taking the people they were abducting, and did not show arrest or search warrants.

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has signed a new counter-terrorism law in August 2015 that gives the security forces free rein to arrest people without judicial order. It uses a wide definition of a "terrorist act" that can be used to effectively ban freedom of expression, assembly and association. It also lets the security forces use lethal force, paving the way for impunity and gives the president powers that can only be invoked during a state of emergency.

Name: Israa Al-Taweel
Gender m/f: f

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