

URGENT ACTION

ABUSED EGYPTIAN ACTIVIST UNJUSTLY DETAINED

Egyptian activist Moaz Al-Sharqawy is at risk of prolonged unjust imprisonment solely due to the peaceful exercise of his human rights. On 11 May, security forces arrested him from his Cairo home and subjected him to an enforced disappearance for 23 days, during which period he was beaten while blindfolded and interrogated without a lawyer present. On 3 June, he appeared before prosecutors who ordered his detention pending investigations into bogus charges of joining and funding a terrorist group. He is held at the notorious Badr 3 prison – where conditions violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment – and is denied regular access to their families and lawyers.

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

Twitter: @EgyptianPPO

Dear Counsellor,

*I am writing to express my deep concern over the arbitrary detention of activist **Moaz Al-Sharqawy**, targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Amnesty International learned that security forces arrested him from his Cairo home on 11 May and subsequently subjected him to an enforced disappearance for 23 days. During this period, they interrogated him without a lawyer present and beat him while blindfolded, which amounts to torture and other ill-treatment. His distraught family and lawyers had approached local police stations, the general prison administration and the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) to inquire about his whereabouts, and lodged a [complaint](#) with the Public Prosecutor's office on 12 May. Despite this, the authorities refused to provide his family and lawyers with any information about his fate or whereabouts or acknowledge his detention until he was brought before the SSSP on 3 June. After interrogating him about his contacts and finances, prosecutors ordered Moaz Al-Sharqawy's detention pending investigations into bogus charges of joining and funding a terrorist organization in Case number 540/2023.*

Moaz Al-Sharqawy is held in the Badr 3 prison, amid heightened concerns for his safety and wellbeing given the well-documented patterns of torture and other ill-treatment at the prison, and the routine denial of family and lawyer visits and access to adequate healthcare. According to informed sources, Moaz al-Sharqawy's mental health gravely deteriorated following his previous arbitrary detention between September 2019 and March 2020, when he was provisionally released pending investigations. In May 2022, an Emergency State Security Court, convicted and sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment and five years of police probation upon release in a grossly unfair and politically motivated group trial, which included former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh and politician Mohamed al-Kassas. Moaz al-Sharqawy was not present at his trial and had lived in hiding since his conviction, further impacting his mental health.

I urge for the immediate release of Moaz al-Sharqawy, for the unjust conviction and sentence against him to be quashed, and for all charges against him to be dropped as they are solely related to the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, he should be granted immediate access to his family, lawyers and any medical assistance he may require and be protected from further torture and other ill-treatment. An effective and impartial investigation into claims of his torture and other ill-treatment must also be conducted, with a view of bringing those responsible to justice in fair trials.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Moaz al-Sharqawy is an Egyptian activist and former Vice-President of the Students' Union at Tanta University in Tanta, Garbiya governorate, whose work focused on defending students' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly inside universities, campaigning on behalf of unjustly jailed students, and calling for accountability for students unlawfully killed by security forces during protests.

According to informed sources, Moaz Al-Sharqawy was first arrested in September 2019 and subjected to enforced disappearance for 24 days by the National Security Agency (NSA), during which period he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment for the purpose of extracting "confessions" and interrogated without the presence of his lawyer. In a communication to the Egyptian authorities dated 9 August 2022, a number of UN independent experts raised concerns that "The investigating officer insulted him, beat him, tied his legs to a metal chair and electrocuted him several times. He was questioned about his activism as a student union leader and his participation in student demonstrations and was forced to stand naked in front of an air-conditioner and threatened with death". He was subsequently transferred to Tora Investigation Prison, where he was held until March 2020 in pre-trial detention pending investigations into bogus terrorism-related charges.

After his conditional release on probation and pending investigations, Moaz al-Sharqawy continued to advocate for the rights of those detained for politically-motivated reasons and cooperated with human rights groups to raise awareness of violations. In January 2021, he was added to the "list of terrorists" solely on the basis of secret investigations by the NSA and without due process. On 29 May 2022, an Emergency State Security Court (ESSC) sentenced Moaz Al-Sharqawy and 24 others to prison terms ranging from 10 to 15 years, after convicting them of trumped-up terrorism-related charges. In recent months, dozens of political opponents and critics have been convicted of bogus charges following grossly unfair trials by ESSCs. Proceedings in front of ESSCs are inherently unfair. Defendants are denied the right to appeal their convictions and sentences in front of a higher tribunal. Only the president retains the power to authorize, quash or commute sentences or to order a retrial.

Since the Badr Prison Complex became operational in mid-2022, the authorities have denied prisoners regular family visits, while some prisoners have been banned from any family visits, amid alarming reports on the punitive use of prolonged solitary confinement and other prisoner abuse and their detention in conditions violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Prison officials also ban prisoners from any phone or written communication with their relatives, effectively subjecting them to incommunicado detention. Prison officials also refuse to accept deliveries of food, clothes, and other essentials to some prisoners from their families, despite well-documented patterns of prison authorities failing to provide those in their custody with sufficient food, potable water, basic items for personal hygiene, adequate clothing and bedding.

Since 2013, Amnesty International has repeatedly documented how security forces have subjected those accused of involvement in terrorism to enforced disappearances for periods ranging between a few days and several months, including to extract "confessions" under torture and other ill-treatment, on which, in some cases, prosecutors rely heavily to formulate charges.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 4 August 2023

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Moaz al-Sharqawy (he/his/him)