



**Middle
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12 November 2021

His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
President, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +20-2-390-1998

Chancellor Hamada El-Sawy
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Fax: +20-2-25774716

Prime Solicitor-General Khaled Diauddin
Supreme State Security Prosecution in the Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +20-2-26381956

Dear President al-Sisi, Chancellor El-Sawy and Prime Solicitor-General
Diauddin,

We write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America to express our deep concern regarding the detention and prosecution of Professor Ayman Mansour Nada, the chair of the Radio and Television Department at Cairo University's Faculty of Mass Communication. Professor Nada has been in pretrial detention since September and faces multiple charges related to his criticisms of Cairo University's leadership, as well as his critical commentary on the state of Egypt's media sector. Professor Nada's detention and prosecution constitute a clear violation of his academic freedom and reflect the ongoing government crackdown on scholars and researchers in the country.

MESA was founded in 1966 to support scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has almost 2800 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

On 28 March 2021, the head of the state-appointed Supreme Council for Media Regulation filed a complaint with the Public Prosecution Office (PPO) accusing Professor Nada of insulting the Council's chair and its members on social media. This complaint was eventually referred to court (Case No. 9840/2021; Fifth Settlement Misdemeanor). Then on 29 March, Cairo University announced the suspension of [Professor Nada](#) for three months in response to a complaint filed by Professor of Radio and Television Barakat Abdel-Aziz accusing him of "committing transgressions contradicting university values and norms." His suspension coincided with attacks leveled against him by television talk show hosts with a long history of defending the government's positions. Some of them filed complaints with the PPO against Professor Nada in retaliation against his criticism of their performance and the state of the media sector more generally. Among them was a complaint filed on behalf of television talk show host Ahmed Moussa in early March. A third complaint was filed [Case No. 23/2021 (limiting Cairo Appeals)] by Cairo University's president and advisors in response to articles Professor Nada allegedly wrote

and in which he detailed reports of financial and administrative misconduct on the part of University officials. Professor Nada has been held in remand detention since 27 September 2021 in conjunction with the aforementioned cases; his employment at Cairo University remains suspended. His detention is also very concerning because the medical conditions from which he [reportedly](#) suffers put his health at [great risk](#).

Professor Nada's detention and prosecution reflect the ongoing deterioration of academic freedom in the country, a concern we raised in a letter dated [15 June 2021](#). Despite recent proclamations by the government expressing its readiness to enhance human rights protections in line with the National Strategy for Human Rights released in September 2021, academic freedom in the country remains under attack, and many of the rights integral to academic freedom, such as freedom of speech, are routinely violated. Examples of this trend include the cases of Master's in Sociology/Social Anthropology student at the Central European University (CEU) in Vienna Ahmed Samir Santawy (see our letter dated [22 February 2021](#)); researcher Ismail Alexandrani (see our letters dated [15 June 2021](#) and [8 February 2016](#)); Alexandria University Assistant Professor of Political Science Ahmed Al Tohamy Abdel-Hay (see our letter dated [24 November 2020](#)); University of Bologna postgraduate student Patrick George Zaki (see our letters dated [18 February 2021](#) and [25 February 2020](#)); head of the Translation Unit of the publication department at Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) Kholoud Said; and freelance translator Marwa Arafa (see our letters dated [6 May 2021](#) and [28 May 2020](#)). The state also continues to retaliate against scholars' exercise of academic freedom by banning them from travel, as exemplified by the case of University of Washington doctoral candidate in political science Walid Khalil el-Sayed Salem (see our letters dated [15 June 2021](#), [4 November 2020](#), [14 August 2019](#), and [6 July 2018](#)). We have learned that Cairo University Political Science Professor Hassan Nafaa is banned from travel as well.

These arbitrary arrests and the extension of the detentions of academics and researchers in Egypt are violations of the 2014 Constitution's Article 65 concerning the freedom of speech and all means of expression and publications, and Article 23, which provides for the freedom of scientific research, among other things. While we note the recent release of some political prisoners and the lifting of the State of Emergency, as well as the government's encouraging (albeit unfulfilled) promises regarding forthcoming improvements in human rights conditions in the country, we urge you to release Professor Ayman Mansour Nada, drop all charges against him, and reinstate his employment at Cairo University without delay. We also urge you to release all other scholars and prisoners of conscience in Egypt. Finally, we reiterate our hope that the government will take steps toward improving the state of academic freedom in the country in the accordance with the "[First Seven Steps Statement](#)" released by Egyptian human rights organizations in May 2021.

We look forward to your response.



Re: Professor Ayman Mansour Nada

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Sincerely,

Dina Rizk Khoury

MESA President

Professor, George Washington University

Laurie Brand

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom

Professor Emerita, University of Southern California

cc:

Dr. Hanafi Gebali, Speaker, Egyptian Parliament

Motaz Zahran, Ambassador, Embassy of Egypt, Washington, D.C.

Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN
Amb. Moushira Khattab, President, National Council for Human Rights, Cairo,
Egypt

The Honorable Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, UN High Commissioner for
Human Rights

The Honorable Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of
Human Rights Defenders

Maria Arena, Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human
Rights

Viktor Almquist, Press Officer for the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
European Parliament

Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Kati Piri, Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament

Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the
Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Yael Lempert, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs,
Department of State, United States Government

Philip McDaniel, Foreign Policy Advisor: Congressman Tom Malinowski (NJ-7),
Member of Egypt Human Rights Caucus

Nancy Chen, Legislative Fellow: Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA), Member of Egypt
Human Rights Caucus