



**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
of North America, Inc.

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20 April 2022

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 (MESA) to express, in the strongest terms possible, our outrage regarding the death of Ayman Hadhoud, an economic researcher, who died in the custody of Egyptian authorities after his forced disappearance in February. This case appears to be part of a continuing, disturbing pattern in Egypt of repression of scholars and researchers through arrests, politically motivated prosecution, inhumane detention conditions, and violence.

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.

A graduate of the American University in Cairo with a BA and an MA in Business Administration, Mr. Hadhoud was a researcher, whose writings and analyses on economic affairs have informed a variety of research and public policy communities, and who also served as an economic advisor to the Reform and Development Party. He was forcibly disappeared in early February, when his family lost contact with him. Shortly thereafter, the family was told by a police contact that he was being detained at Al-Amiriyya Police Station (northwest of the Cairo governorate). The family made various requests to authorities to visit Mr. Hadhoud, but all their requests were denied. They eventually learned that he had been transferred to Abbasiyya Psychiatric Hospital, where he was reportedly being held for evaluation, but hospital personnel denied them access to visit Mr. Hadhoud. On one occasion, an official informed the family that they needed to obtain a permit from the Public Prosecutor's Office, since Mr. Hadhoud was allegedly being held in conjunction with a criminal case. On another occasion, the same official denied that Mr. Hadhoud was even at the hospital.

On 4 April 2022, the family was told by a hospital contact that Mr. Hadhoud had in fact died in early March. Only on 9 April did the family [receive](#) the first official communication about his death. Since that date, the authorities have failed to produce a credible report either of the circumstances under which Mr. Hadhoud was arrested and detained or of the reasons for his death. Official accounts have been incomplete and at times [contradictory](#), and do not provide the public or Mr. Hadhoud's loved ones with answers to important questions. These questions include (but are not limited to):

1. Why were Mr. Hadhoud's family members not informed of his death until more than a month after his passing?
2. Why did the authorities deny knowledge of Mr. Hadhoud's whereabouts at various points between his forced disappearance and his death if he was in fact being held in conjunction with an ongoing investigation?
3. Why was he denied visitation and access to legal counsel during his detention?
4. What are the circumstances surrounding his death?
5. Is there an ongoing investigation into suspected wrongdoing on the part of police and hospital officials responsible for Mr. Hadhoud's well-being during his detention?
6. Why did the Public Prosecution issue a [statement](#) on April 11 denying that Mr. Hadhoud's body manifested evidence of foul play in relation to his death although the deceased's brother [reported](#) seeing signs of a fractured skull and bruising on the body?

The lack of transparency surrounding these (and many other) issues, coupled with the contradictory official reports regarding Mr. Hadhoud's arrest and death, raise [serious concerns](#) about a possible coverup of wrongdoing.

We therefore call upon you to open an independent investigation into Mr. Hadhoud's case, to provide Mr. Hadhoud's family with the answers they seek, and to hold responsible any and all parties who may be liable for his death or any other wrongdoing in the handling of his case.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Eve Troutt Powell
MESA President
Professor, University of Pennsylvania



Re: Ayman Hadhoud

20 April 2022

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Brand', is written in a cursive style.

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

Mohamad Anwar El-Sadat, President, Reform and Development Party, 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 Almqvist, 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