



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

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17 August 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 of North America to express our concern regarding Dr. Seif Fateen, Professor of Chemical Engineering at Zewail University, who has been imprisoned for nearly four years. Dr. Fateen is a renowned professor who has collaborated with research partners in the United States, Italy, Spain, Mexico, and Singapore. Additionally, from 2012 to 2013, he served as an Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education. Prior to his appointment at Zewail University, he earned a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served as an Associate Professor at Cairo University and the American University in Cairo.

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 14 November 2018, security forces affiliated with the National Security Agency raided Dr. Fateen's home and arrested him without a warrant. For the next nine months, Dr. Fateen was disappeared, and his family was unable to locate him or determine if he was still alive. During that time, Dr. Fateen was subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment. He was blindfolded and subjected to electric shocks on his arm and genitalia during an interrogation. He was regularly handcuffed to a pipe, often for the entire night. He was denied adequate food, hygiene supplies, and medical treatment. Bathroom access was limited.

On 5 August 2019, Dr. Fateen appeared in court where he was accused of joining and financing a terrorist group. In September 2019 he was moved to the Qanater prison, where he has been held in pretrial detention in connection with Case 930/2019, known as the "Hope Case." Other defendants in the [Hope Case](#) include prominent political activists, writers, and labor activists. Dr. Fateen's pretrial detention has been perfunctorily renewed for the past three years, far



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exceeding the legal limit of two years. Throughout this time, Dr. Fateen and his lawyer have not been permitted to mount a substantive challenge to his detention in court.

The conditions of Dr. Fateen's detention have improved somewhat but continue to be inhumane. He is housed with 20 other prisoners and only allowed to leave his cell for less than two hours each day. He has been denied reading materials, appropriate clothing, and medicine. One member of his family is allowed to visit once per month. These restrictions are particularly hard for Dr. Fateen's wife and seven children, the youngest of whom is only six years old.

Dr. Fateen is part of an increasingly large population of prisoners held in [pretrial detention](#) in Egypt for months or years. According to a 16 July 2022 *New York Times* investigation, 453 academics were arrested between 2013 and 2020 and detained for varying amounts of time. This has a chilling effect on academic freedom and freedom of expression. Restrictions on academic freedom constitute violations of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution's Article 65, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom in all means of expression and publications, and of Article 23, which provides for freedom of scientific research.

MESA welcomes the recent release and pardon of researcher Ahmed Samir Santawy and urges you to continue supporting academic freedom by freeing Dr. Fateen, as well as Ismail Alexandrani, Marwa Arafa, and Ahmed Al Tohamy Abdel-Hay. We also call on you to allow Waleed Salem to travel freely so that he may reunite with his family and resume his studies [see our letter dated [19 July 2022](#)].

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eve M. Troutt Powell'.

Eve Troutt Powell
MESA President
Professor, University of Pennsylvania

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurie A. Brand'.

Laurie Brand
Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom
Professor Emerita, University of Southern California

cc:



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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