



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

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14 September 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 deep concern regarding the continued imprisonment of Egyptian Islamic scholar Dr. Salah Soltan. Dr. Soltan, a U.S. permanent resident, has been in prison for nearly ten years and was reportedly the victim of forced disappearance, torture, and inhumane detention conditions. He was sentenced to death and life in prison in two separate cases featuring violations of basic standards of due process and fair trial.

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 2700 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.

Dr. Soltan, formerly a professor of Islamic Law at Cairo University and Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, was arrested on 21 September 2013 and charged with inciting violence, being part of a terrorist organization, plotting to cause chaos, and spreading false information. He was later sentenced to death and life in prison in two mass trials, namely Case No. 2210/2014, also known as the "Rabaa Operation Trial," and Case No. 8615/2013, also known as "Al-Fateh Mosque Trial." Both trials were widely viewed as unfair and lacking in due process. In November 2018, Dr. Soltan's detention was declared arbitrary by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Reports on Dr. Soltan's detention conditions indicate that on 13 March 2016, he was assaulted by an officer who broke his jaw. He was forcibly disappeared between June 2020 and August 2022. Egyptian authorities continue to deny Dr. Soltan necessary medical care despite his deteriorating health.

We are also concerned about reports that Egyptian authorities have used Dr. Soltan's detention to pressure his U.S.-based son Mohamed to cease his advocacy on behalf of political prisoners in Egypt.

Dr. Soltan's case is part of an alarming trend of increasing transgressions against the rights of academics and researchers in Egypt. His continued imprisonment and mistreatment are in violation of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech (Article 65), freedom of scientific research (Article 23), and personal freedom (Article 54).

We call upon you to release Dr. Soltan and bring an end to the inhumane detention he has endured for the past decade. We also urge you to support academic freedom by freeing all unjustly detained scholars and researchers and lift all restrictions on their freedom of movement [see our letters dated [17 August 2022](#), [19 July 2022](#), [4 May 2022](#), and [10 February 2022](#)].

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Eve Troutt Powell  
MESA President  
Professor, University of Pennsylvania



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

Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

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



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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