

WRONGFUL DETENTION OF TWO US GREEN CARD HOLDERS IMPRISONED IN EGYPT RENEWED FOR ANOTHER 45 DAYS

Their Case Has Languished More Than 278 Days in Pre-Trial Detention, With No End In Sight

Washington DC – On Sunday, April 1, and Tuesday, April 3, an Egyptian Court renewed the detentions of Qatari citizen Ola Al-Qaradawi and her Egyptian husband, Hosam Al-Din Khalaf, for 45 more days each. This marks the fourth such 45-day renewal for the couple, and the thirteenth renewal for both of them overall. Their eight US citizen family members are very fearful for Ola and Hosam’s lives, in light of the brutal treatment to which both have been continuously subjected in their detention.

More than nine months ago, on June 30, 2017, Ola and Hosam were arrested without a warrant by Egyptian State Security agents while on vacation in northern Egypt. Upon complying with the authorities’ request to submit themselves for “questioning,” Ola and Hosam were disappeared for two days before resurfacing in separate Egyptian prisons. To date, the couple has been detained “pending investigations” – that is, imprisoned without charge, kept in extended pre-trial detention, and deprived of numerous rights under both Egyptian and international law.

They have been held *incommunicado* between renewals of their detention periods; repeatedly denied access to legal counsel, family, and the consular visits to which Ola is entitled as a Qatari citizen; and denied access to all evidence and information, and the ability to challenge their unlawful detention. Even the US State Department, concerned for the health and wellbeing of the couple – who had received approval to be US legal permanent residents in 2017 – has been denied access to Ola and Hosam’s renewal hearings despite several requests. Under international law, these hearings should be public.

Yet despite the severity of the due process violations against Ola and Hosam, the most immediate and desperate concern is the couple’s rapidly-failing health. Both have been kept in solitary confinement, denied adequate food and water, and denied access to appropriate medical treatment.

Specifically, during Ola’s most recent detention renewal hearing on April 1, she was actively prevented by the court from speaking. She was placed in a glass cage and forbidden even to exchange a few words with her lawyer. From a distance, her lawyer was horrified to see that Ola had lost even more weight during the 45 days that he had been prevented from meeting with her, and appeared incredibly sick and frail. We have learned that she is subjected to increasing abuse by a fellow prisoner, forced to clean bathrooms and prison cells, and otherwise still detained entirely in solitary confinement in a cell with no natural light, ventilation, or toilet.

As their daughter Aayah Hossam, a US citizen, has stated, “I was totally devastated to hear about my mother’s condition and cannot find a way to comprehend the cruelty of the Egyptian Government. I’ve been afraid for my mother’s health, but now I am afraid for her very life.”

The family's international counsel, Jared Genser, explained that the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is expected to consider Ola and Hosam's cases during their April 2018 session. He added "We look forward to the Working Group considering and issuing an opinion on Ola and Hosam's cases. It is self-evident their extended pre-trial detention without charge – and the conditions under which Ola and Hosam are being treated – are arbitrary and in flagrant violation of international law."

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