

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED AND TORTURED

Human rights defender Patrick Zaki George, who suffers from asthma, is at particular risk if exposed to COVID-19 in Tora Investigation Prison. On 5 May 2020, Supreme State Security prosecutors (SSSP) renewed his detention for 15 days pending investigations without Patrick or his lawyer present. The prison authorities failed to transfer him to the SSSP for seven weeks to attend his detention renewal session.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

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Dear Counsellor,

Amid rising fears over the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Egypt's overcrowded prisons, the Egyptian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release prisoner of conscience **Patrick Zaki George**. Patrick should never have been detained for his legitimate work as a human rights defender in the first place. His asthma puts him at a higher risk to the virus according to the World Health Organisation's list of vulnerable groups. The well-documented concerns over overcrowded, unhygienic and unsanitary detention conditions in Egyptian prisons aggravate risks of the spread of COVID-19 infections.

Patrick's last family prison visit was on 9 March 2020. The following day, the Egyptian authorities suspended all prison visits as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the authorities failed to introduce regular alternative means of communication between detainees and their families and lawyers, including bi-monthly phone calls as prescribed by Egyptian law. Some, but not all, inmates have been able to send and receive letters.

On 7 February 2020, immigration officers at Cairo airport arbitrarily arrested human rights researcher Patrick Zaki George at 4:30 am upon his return from Italy where he had been doing an Erasmus study programme in Bologna. According to his lawyers, Egyptian National Security Agency (NSA) officers asked him about his human rights work during his time in Egypt and beat him on his stomach and back and tortured him with electric shocks on his upper body during interrogation. The following day, prosecutors in al-Mansoura ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigations on "terrorism"-related charges. Prosecutors said they were relying on Facebook posts as evidence but did not allow him or his lawyer to examine them.

**I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Patrick Zaki George as his detention stems solely from his human rights work and political opinions he has expressed on social media. I also urge you to open an independent investigation into his torture allegations. I further urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience. All persons in detention in Egypt must be guaranteed access to lawyers, family and adequate healthcare, especially if they are at high risk of COVID-19.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Patrick Zaki was a human rights' researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), with a focus on gender and sexual minorities. Since August 2019, he moved to Italy to do his Masters in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Bologna. Patrick's arrest comes in the context of the post-September 2019 protest crackdown, the largest on dissenting voices since 2014. His arrest warrant was dated 24 September 2019. He joined the long list of human rights defenders and peaceful political activists behind bars in Egypt including [Alaa Abdel Fattah](#), [Mohamed el-Baqer](#), [Mahienour el-Masry](#).

On 20 September 2019, scattered protests broke across Egyptian cities, calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. The protests had been triggered by viral videos in which Mohamed Ali, a former army contractor, accused army leaders and the president of wasting public money on building luxury properties. In the weeks that followed, Amnesty International [documented](#) how the Egyptian security forces carried out sweeping arrests of peaceful protesters, journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests from taking place. According to Egyptian human rights lawyers, the authorities have arrested at least 4,000 individuals in relation to their perceived participation or support of the protests. The authorities ordered the pre-trial detention of at least 3,715 pending investigations over "terrorism" related charges in the largest single protests-related criminal investigation in Egypt's history.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 22 June 2020.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Patrick Zaki George (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/1800/2020/en/>