

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF SWEDEN'S SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY ACADEMIES

Stockholm 17 February 2022

Elisabeth Rachlew /ch

His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace, Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt

Your Excellency,

We, the Human Rights Committee of Sweden's Scientific and Literary Academies, write respectfully to express our urgent concern about Ahmed Samir Santawy, an Egyptian researcher and graduate student in the social sciences, who is serving a four-year prison sentence, under difficult conditions of confinement, on spurious state security-related charges in apparent connection with his academic work.

Since the fall of 2019, Mr. Santawy has been a graduate student of sociology and social anthropology at Central European University, now in Vienna, Austria, where his academic work has focused on women's rights, including the history of women's reproductive rights in Egypt. In February 2021, Mr. Santawy was arrested by officers of the National Security Agency (NSA) shortly after his return to Egypt to visit family. It is our understanding that he was subjected to enforced disappearance for several days before being brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) and that he was questioned repeatedly about his academic research. On February 6, he was charged with publishing false information, reportedly in connection with online criticism of the government, which he denies writing. It is our understanding that this case remains pending.

After nearly four months in detention, during which time Mr. Santawy alleges he was subjected to prolonged solitary confinement and physical abuse, he was questioned and charged—effectively for the same alleged offense—in a new case by the SSSP. A few days later, his lawyer was informed that he had been referred to trial before the Emergency State Security Court on charges of spreading false information. In late June, Mr. Santawy was convicted. It is our understanding that, contrary to international due process standards, this verdict cannot be appealed.

In light of the information above we respectfully request you to use your good offices to ensure his immediate and unconditional release from prison, as well as a full and independent investigation into his allegations of physical abuse. In the interim, we ask you to ensure that Mr. Santawy's conditions of confinement comply with the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules).

Thank you, Your Excellency, for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely yours,


Elisabeth Rachlew

Professor, Chairman of the Human Rights Committee

Copy: His Excellency Sameh Hassan Shoukry Selim, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Embassy of Egypt in Stockholm, Sweden
The Embassy of Sweden in Cairo, Egypt



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