

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK   ITALY SECTION

Subject: Petition in support of Mr. Patrick George Zaki

To: His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
President, Arab Republic of Egypt
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Date: 23rd December 2020

Your Excellency,

We write on behalf of *Scholars at Risk* Italy to express grave concern for Patrick George Zaki, a postgraduate student at the University of Bologna who was arrested on February 7, 2020, and afterwards allegedly subjected to torture, in apparent retaliation for his activity as a researcher.


Mr. Zaki is a twenty-eight year old Egyptian student who came to Italy in August 2019, to pursue a master's degree at the University of Bologna. Moreover, he is a researcher for the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), an organization based in Cairo committed to defending Human Rights.

As members of our national network of higher education institutions, we are gravely concerned about the decision taken by the Egyptian Court on the 7th December 2020 to extend the pre-trial detention for another 45 days. As scholars and teachers, we deeply feel our responsibility towards students, who pursue their research projects with enthusiasm and commitment.

The health situation of Mr. Zaki is seriously compromised by the harsh conditions in which he is currently detained while awaiting for trial. Mr. Zaki suffers from asthma, and he is at particular risk if exposed to *COVID-19* in the Tora Prison. In a December 12, 2020, letter to his family, Mr. Zaki expressed that he has serious backpain and his mental health is deteriorating. We therefore appeal to your role as the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt to consider this serious matter, and more broadly the humanitarian concerns that we all share in this health-emergency situation.

We urge you to grant Mr. Zaki the permission to wait for his trial at home with his family, where he could also recover from the physical suffering after many months of detention. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and we trust your understanding and sympathy for the dispassionate motives that guide us all.

Sincerely,



Prof. Ester Gallo, University of Trento
Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy and SAR International Advisory Committee

Also for

Prof. Claudia Padovani, University of Padova. Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy and SAR European Advocacy Committee for Academic Freedom

Prof. Francesca Helm, University of Padova. Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy

CC:

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