

[Egypt | UN human rights experts denounce reprisal against lawyer Ebrahim Metwally](#)

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In an urgent [joint statement](#) on 15 September 2017, the Chair of the UN Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances (WGEID) and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders expressed dismay about the arrest of lawyer and activist, Ebrahim Abdelmonem Metwally Hegazy.

Metwally, the co-founder of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared - a network of families of forcibly disappeared in Egypt - was arrested and prevented from boarding a flight to Geneva on 10 September to attend the 113th Session of the WGEID. Metwally founded the Association of the Families of Disappeared following the disappearance of his son in July 2013, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

The WGEID and Special Rapporteur denounced the way he is treated, stating that 'the fact that Mr. Metwally was arrested while en route to meet the Working Group suggests that this is an act of reprisal for his cooperation with a United Nations human rights mechanism, as well as a deliberate obstruction of his legitimate human rights activity to seek to establish the fate and whereabouts of his son and other disappeared people in Egypt.'

This case takes place in the context of [increased reports of cases of intimidation and reprisal](#). Metwally's whereabouts remained unknown for two days following his arrest. It has been alleged that he was tortured during that time. Since the arrest, he has been charged with 'running a group that was illegally established, spreading false news, and cooperating with foreign organisations'. He was issued with a 15-day detention order and transferred to the Maximum Security Prison known as Scorpion (*al-Aqrab*) at the Tora Prisons Complex in Cairo, a prison notorious for inhumane detention conditions and the ill-treatment of prisoners.

The UN experts called on the Egyptian authorities to, '[immediately provide us with all relevant information concerning his arrest and detention, to fully ensure Mr Metwally's right to physical and psychological integrity as well as to due process.](#)' The experts expressed serious concern with regard to the allegations that Metwally had been tortured. Their statement has also been endorsed by the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention.

'We are incredibly concerned by this undeniable case of reprisal. It is the clearest signal that more needs to be done by the Human Rights Council, its President and States to develop a systematic response to reprisals', said ISHR's Legal Counsel and reprisals focal point Tess McEvoy. 'We call on States to support the resolution on reprisals currently being negotiated at the Human Rights Council. The right to communicate with the UN must be protected', McEvoy added.

Contact: Tess McEvoy, Legal Counsel and reprisals focal point, t.mcevoy@ishr.ch.

Photo: Association of the Families of Disappeared, Egypt

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