

URGENT ACTION

UNJUSTLY JAILED JOURNALIST DENIED HEALTHCARE

Tawfik Ghanem, a 68-year-old Egyptian journalist, has been arbitrarily detained since May 21, 2021 without trial, pending investigations by the Supreme State Security Prosecution into charges of “spreading false news” and “misusing social media”, among others. Authorities in Badr 1 prison, where he is held, continue to deny him access to adequate healthcare, including transfer to hospital and medication, for his numerous health conditions including diabetes, a bone disease and a skin condition. He should be released immediately and unconditionally as he is held solely in connection with his legitimate media work.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Tenth Urgent Action 38.17**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Public Prosecutor Mohamed Shawky Ayyad
Office of the Public Prosecutor; Madinat al-Rehab;
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2577 4716
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Egyptian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Motaz Mounir Zahran
3521 International Court, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Email: Embassy@egyptembassy.net

Dear Counsellor,

Tawfik Ghanem has been arbitrarily detained since May 21, 2021, solely because of his legitimate media work, as the former regional director of Anadolu Agency, a state-run Turkish news agency. Following his arrest, Egyptian authorities subjected Tawfik Ghanem to enforced disappearance for five days during which he was interrogated without a lawyer present about his previous work at Anadolu Agency. Since then, authorities renewed his pretrial detention without allowing him to meaningfully challenge the lawfulness of his detention. His pretrial detention has exceeded the maximum limit of two years permissible under Egyptian law.

Since his arrest, authorities have denied him his rights to consult a lawyer of his choosing in private and to adequate defense. Tawfik Ghanem is held in Badr 1 prison, some 70km northeast of Cairo, and denied access to adequate healthcare. His family said that since his arrest he has lost about 20kg, and that he suffers from several medical conditions. For his treatment, he is forced to rely mostly on advice from doctors imprisoned with him.

I urge you to ensure that Tawfik Ghanem is immediately and unconditionally released and all charges against him dropped as he is detained solely for his media work. Pending his release, he must be granted regular access to his family, lawyers, and adequate healthcare, and held in conditions that comply with international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Following his first questioning by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) in May 2021, Tawfik Ghanem was transferred to Tora Investigation prison, where he remained until December 2021. According to his relatives, prison authorities there denied him a bed and he was forced to sleep on two blankets on the floor despite his bone disease. His prison conditions deteriorated further when he was transferred to Abou Zaabal prison in December 2021, where he remained detained for two years. For some 12 months following his transfer, authorities banned his access to books and newspapers, and severely restricted family visits. While the situation improved during his second year there, for the duration of his detention at Abu Zaabal, he had no direct access to sunlight and could only exercise in an indoor area.

Since January 1, 2024, he has been held in Badr 1 prison in a cell with eight other people for 23 hours a day as he is only allowed out of the cell for an hour of exercise daily. The cell does not have a fan, which makes it unbearably hot during the summer months. During public holidays, the cell remains closed 24 hours a day. His family is permitted to visit him once a month. According to his relatives, the prison administration occasionally withholds essential items like books, newspapers, pens, and hygiene products from him and other prisoners held for political reasons. Relatives are also not allowed to bring their detained loved ones personal items such as clothing.

Since 2016, the Egyptian authorities have consolidated their grip on the media landscape and intensified their crackdown on journalists daring to deviate from the official narrative. Since then, the authorities have subjected dozens of journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecutions on trumped-up terrorism-related charges and dismissals simply for expressing critical views. Security forces have raided the few remaining independent online media platforms in Egypt and blocked hundreds of websites. The adoption of draconian media and cyber legislation in 2018 further granted the authorities overly broad powers to regulate media content, restrict journalists' freedom of expression, and impose prison terms for criticism online. At the time of writing, at least 14 journalists remained behind bars after being convicted or pending investigations into charges of "spreading false news", belonging to a "terrorist" group, or "misuse of social media". Over 600 news, human rights and other websites continued to be blocked. In 2023, the authorities blocked the website of the NGO Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the news sites of Soulta 4 and Masr 360. Staff at Mada Masr, an independent media platform, continue to face politically motivated prosecutions and investigations, including in relation to its publication in October 2023 of an investigative report on the Rafah border crossing. Journalists were among the 820 people added to the government's "list of terrorists" throughout 2023 without due process, depriving them of civic and political rights.

Throughout his career, Tawfik Ghanem has headed a number of media organizations, including Media International, which ran the Islam Online website for ten years. Most recently, he served as regional director of the Anadolu Agency in Cairo until his retirement in 2015.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: January 9, 2025

NAME AND PRONOUN: Tawfik Ghanem (he/him).