

Lawyers for Lawyers expresses concerns over the alleged enforced disappearance of Egyptian lawyer Ahmed Kassem since February 2024.

According to the information received by Lawyers for Lawyers, Egyptian lawyer Ahmed Kassem was abducted from his home in Alexandria in August 2023 and held incommunicado until January 2024, when he was released to a hospital due to severe dehydration. While hospitalised, Mr. Kassem disclosed having been held inconspicuously for the past 5 months in a homeland security prison, where he was tortured, denied an arrest warrant, and deprived of a trial. During his detention, Mr. Kassem was allegedly denied access to legal representation and contact with his family. Lawyers for Lawyers has been informed that three weeks after his release, Mr. Kassem was forcibly disappeared again and remains unaccounted for. Such violence against Mr. Kassem may amount to enforced disappearance and torture. It is believed that Mr. Kassem has been targeted because of his work defending political opponents to the regime.

The alleged enforced disappearance of Mr. Kassem is indicative of a broader pattern employed by Egyptian authorities to silence political opponents and their legal representatives. Since 2020, Egypt has received more communications from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances than any other nation.¹ Lawyers for Lawyers has previously reported similar cases to that of Mr. Kassem, including those of [Islam Salama](#), [Ibrahim Metwally](#), [Makarios Lahzy](#), and [Youssef Mansour](#), all of whom lawyers who were forcibly disappeared. In 2021, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders already raised concerns over the continued and widespread use of arrests and incommunicado holdings by Egyptian authorities against political opponents, and lawyers.²

Lawyers for Lawyers draws attention to UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/32 where it reminded all states that incommunicado detention, whilst conducive to torture, also constitute a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, amounting to torture in certain cases. The Commission urged states to respect safeguards pertaining to the liberty, security and dignity of the person. Lawyers for Lawyers reminds of Egypt's accession and commitment to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, thus, to preventing acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.³

Lawyers for Lawyers further wishes to draw attention to the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Basic Principles),⁴ in particular Principles 16 and 23, which read:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

¹ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), *ICJ denounces Egypt's large-scale use of enforced disappearances to silence any kind of opposition (UN Statement)* (2022) retrieved from: [ICJ denounces Egypt's large-scale use of enforced disappearances to silence any kind of opposition \(UN Statement\) | ICJ](#).

² Lawlor, Mary, *Egypt: Human rights defenders held incommunicado, face spurious charges, says UN expert*, (July 15, 2021) retrieved from: [Egypt: Human rights defenders held incommunicado, face spurious charges, says UN expert | OHCHR](#).

³ Article 2(1) CAT.

⁴ UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-role-lawyers>



23. Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession

Lawyers for Lawyers is deeply concerned over the detrimental impact these practices have on the fundamental rights of lawyers to a fair trial, freedom from torture, and liberty. We are further concerned by the case of Mr. Kassem, allegations of torture, and lack of communication or information about his whereabouts since February 2024.