

COUNSEL FOR IMPRISONED US LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS OLA AL-QARADAWI & HOSAM KHALAF FILE PETITION WITH UN WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION

Washington D.C. and Cairo – Ola Al-Qaradawi and Hosam Khalaf’s international legal team, led by human rights lawyer Jared Genser, filed a petition today with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, requesting that it investigate the ongoing detention of Ola and Hosam and conclude that they are being held in violation of Egypt’s obligations under international law.

On June 30, 2017, Ola and Hosam were arrested without a warrant by Egyptian State Security and have been detained continuously in 24-hour solitary confinement for a total of 90 days. The cruel and inhumane treatment they face in their detention conditions was the subject of a formal complaint filed by Genser last week with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Health.

Egyptian authorities have not given Ola and Hosam any official reason for their arrest and ongoing detention. However, in flagrant violation of the internationally guaranteed right to the presumption of innocence, the Egyptian authorities have issued numerous statements to the media, alleging that Ola and Hosam have been charged with crimes relating to terrorism and membership in an illegal group. On the contrary, neither Ola and Hosam have been presented with any documentation of any kind relating to their arrest or ongoing detention. Three months into their ordeal, they have yet to even be presented to a court, let alone charged with any crimes. They strenuously deny the informal allegations being lodged against them by Egypt’s state-run media.

In commenting on the submission to the Working Group, Jared Genser said “It is not too late for the prosecution and State Security to step back and reconsider its posture. The Government of Egypt has not yet charged Ola and Hosam with any crimes. Rather than having this case be adjudicated by the United Nations, Egypt can just release them and enable them to travel to the United States to be reunited with their family.” While every case is taken up individually on its own merits by the Working Group, Genser has prevailed in dozens of cases he has taken to the body over the years, and never lost.

Amnesty International issued an urgent action appeal on September 8, 2017 calling on Egyptian authorities to immediately end Ola and Hosam’s solitary confinement and to ensure humane conditions for the couple and access to health care. On September 14, 2017, Human Rights Watch found that the Egyptian authorities had repeatedly violated Ola and Hosam’s fundamental rights and demanded authorities issue charges or immediately release them. On September 22, 2017, their daughter Aayah Hossam went public with the story of her parents’ detention, publishing an op-ed in *The Hill*.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is an independent and impartial body consisting of five members appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. The members are currently from Australia, Benin, Latvia, Mexico, and South Korea. The Working Group has the authority to investigate and issue legal opinions about alleged cases of deprivation of liberty imposed arbitrarily.

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