

## TEENAGER TORTURED AND IMPRISONED IN EGYPT

### HEALTH AT RISK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Aser Mohamed was arrested in 2016 when he was just 14 years old. He reports that he was subjected to torture in detention to force him to “confess” and he was placed in pre-trial detention, despite this being banned in Egypt for children under 15.

Aser was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in October 2019 after he was convicted of membership of the banned Muslim Brotherhood group and attacking a hotel in 2016.

Amnesty International has called for the quashing of his sentence given the gross violations of his rights to a fair trial, including the use of confessions extracted under torture as evidence against him.

On 10 March the Egyptian authorities suspended all prison visits as a measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19. They failed to introduce regular alternative means of communication between detainees and their families and lawyers, such as bi-monthly phone calls, as prescribed by Egyptian law. Since the suspension of the visits Wadi al-Natrum prison authorities allowed Aser Mohamed’s family to send him food and a letter twice on 23 April 2020 and 14 May 2020.

Aser’s relatives were last able to visit him on 2 March 2020. His family reported that he was suffering from depression, and that he also suffers from a chronic allergy that causes respiratory difficulties. This condition puts him at particular risk of severe covid-19 according to the World Health Organisation’s list of vulnerable groups. Well-documented concerns about overcrowded, unhygienic and unsanitary conditions in Egyptian prisons aggravate risks of the spread of covid-19 infections.

### TAKE ACTION:

**Call on the Egyptian authorities to quash Aser’s conviction, immediately release him and launch investigations into his enforced disappearance and torture allegations.**

**Also call on them to ensure that, pending his release, he is provided with means to communicate with his family and lawyers and ask them to take measures to protect the health of all prisoners amid the covid-19 pandemic.**

On 12 January 2016 armed police and National Security Agency (NSA) officers raided 14-year-old Aser Mohamed’s home. Agents said they were taking him away for brief questioning, but he was gone for 24 days, during which nobody knew where he was or why he had been taken.

On 15 February Aser Mohamed appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution in New Cairo for questioning without his lawyer. The prosecutor charged Aser Mohamed with belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and participating in a hotel attack on 7 January 2016. When Aser denied the charges, he alleged that the prosecutor responded: *“It seems that you want to go back to the electric shocks again”*, indicating that the prosecutor knew Aser Mohamed had been subjected to electric shocks torture in detention by the NSA to force him to ‘confess’. The prosecutor took no action to investigate or hold those responsible for torture to account.

Aser was held in pre-trial detention, even though this is banned for children under the age of 15. His trial began in August 2016, and after repeated postponements he was convicted and sentenced in October 2019.

Aser’s lawyer filed a cassation request to the criminal court at the end of 2019 and is still waiting for the court to set a hearing date.



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## TEMPLATE LETTER

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi  
Office of the President  
Al Ittihadia Palace  
Cairo  
Arab Republic of Egypt

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern at the continued imprisonment of Aser Mohammed, who was subjected to enforced disappearance and reportedly tortured when he was just 14 years old. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment following conviction in October 2019, following a trial where confessions allegedly extracted under torture were used against him.

I hope that Aser Mohamed's conviction will be quashed, that he will be immediately released, and that an investigation is launched into his enforced disappearance and torture allegations.

Furthermore, I understand that prison visits have been suspended to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and regular alternative means of communication have not been introduced. I am also aware that Aser Mohamed suffers from a chronic allergy that causes respiratory difficulties and puts him at particular risk of severe covid-19.

I therefore ask that, pending his release, Aser Mohamed is provided with the means to communicate with his family and lawyers, and that measures are taken to protect his health, and the health of all prisoners in Egypt during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

You can decorate your letters and cards (and envelopes) with rainbows and also mention in your letter that the rainbow has become a symbol of hope in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic.



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