



Austrian student on a hunger strike in Egyptian prison after an unjust verdict: Free Ahmed Samir!

Since the 1st of February 2021, Ahmed Samir Santawy, a student of the Central European University (CEU) in Austria, has been arbitrarily detained by the Egyptian Security Forces. Since the beginning, the European Students' Union and the Global Student Forum have been following the case, in order to support the campaigners of the *#FreeAhmedSamir* movement and the international human rights organisations in their efforts to achieve his release.

Tragically, on 22nd June, Ahmed was sentenced to four years in prison, based on charges of spreading false news about the situation in Egypt from abroad. The evidence was based on Facebook posts Ahmed denied writing. Regardless of the actual authorship, this sentence is unprecedented and presents a gross violation of the right to freedom of speech. Since the case was tried in the Emergency State Security Court, Ahmed cannot appeal against the ruling. Upon hearing the news about his verdict, Ahmed started a hunger strike. He clearly stated that he is not a criminal, and he either leaves the prison or dies. Ahmed's condition is rapidly deteriorating and is now being held in hospital. He has been held in Liman Tora Prison for five months. Apart from brief monthly family visits and some letters, Ahmed has not been allowed any communication with the outside world. His human rights have been violated on several occasions. He reported that he was assaulted by a prison guard, that he was being held in solitary confinement for a month and in the first few months he was not allowed to have visitors or contact with his lawyers. Furthermore, Ahmed Samir is baselessly accused also of joining and funding a terrorist organisation, for which the trial has not started yet.

We demand the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union to assess the situation of human rights in Egypt, to which Ahmed Samir's case is but an example, together with those of Patrick Zaki and Giulio Regeni, and put pressure on the Egyptian government to take all the necessary legal actions to liberate Ahmed Samir and provide him with the urgently needed health care.

President Al-Sisi has the power to stop this unfair treatment, saving Ahmed Samir's life. We support the demand of the *#free_ahmed_samir* campaign asking for Presidential rejection of the sentence, that should be a first step towards better

policies, canceling any persecution based on political thought, freedom of expression and freedom of academic research in Egypt.

Ahmed Samir's deteriorating conditions require urgent action and constant international attention: the European Students' Union and the Global Student Forum will be there until he is free and safe back in Austria!