

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE DIES IN DETENTION

Prisoner of conscience and Nubian activist Mohamed Saleh Sorour (also known as Gamal Sorour) died in custody in Aswan, Egypt on 4 November, after slipping into a diabetic coma and not getting immediate medical attention. He was arrested and detained on 3 September alongside 24 other Nubian activists for engaging in peaceful protest. The 24 Nubian activists are prisoners of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Nubian activist Mohamed Saleh Sorour (also known as **Gamal Sorour**) died on 4 November after falling into a diabetic coma, while in detention in Aswan, in the south of Egypt. According to his relatives, Gamal Sorour had been suffering from diabetes and had two heart attacks two years ago. He had been receiving regular treatment for his health problems, before his arrest on 3 September for partaking in a peaceful protest. Despite other inmates repeatedly knocking on the cell door begging prison guards for help, it took prison authorities three hours to take Gamal Sorour to the hospital, according to lawyers and relatives.

Security forces arrested Gamal Sorour along with **24 other Nubian activists**, after the police violently dispersed their peaceful protest in Aswan on 3 September. Under the slogan of “the Nubian Assembly Day”, activists from the Nubian community in Aswan sang Nubian songs during the protest and called for their right to return to their historical lands, following waves of internal displacement.

Protesters had just gathered and marched 500 meters in al-Guzzayra square in downtown Aswan, when security forces surrounded them, and attacked the participants. Police arrested 25 of the men and took them to al-Shalal Security Forces camp in Aswan. They were not allowed access to their families or lawyers for four days. The day after their arrest, prosecutors arrived at the camp and interrogated the men in the absence of their lawyers.

Prosecutors ordered their detention on charges of “participating in an unauthorized protest” and “possessing publications harmful to national unity and public safety” and have been renewing their detention since then.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Immediately and unconditionally release the 24 Nubian activists as they are being detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Pending their release, ensure the 24 activists have access to adequate regular health care;
- Immediately initiate an independent, impartial, and effective investigation into the death of Gamal Sorour with a view to bringing anyone suspected of criminal responsibility for the death of Gamal Sorour to justice, without resorting to the death penalty.

Contact these two officials by 19 December, 2017:

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President, Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +202 2391 1441
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ambassador Yasser Reda

Embassy of Egypt
3521 International Ct NW, Washington DC 20008
Fax: 202 244 4319 -OR- 202 244 5131 | Phone: 202 895 5400 |
Email: embassy@egyptembassy.net
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 249.17*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces have previously dispersed Nubian activists' peaceful gatherings. On 19 November 2016, police stopped a peaceful march in support of the community's human rights and encircled protesters for several hours without food or water, until they were forced to leave.

The protests are a response to the forcible displacement of Nubians, who are Indigenous peoples, from their traditional lands by successive Egyptian governments for development projects. The displacement poses a threat to the preservation of the Nubian cultural, historical, and linguistic identity, which had already been severely eroded. The displacement of Nubians has had huge socio-economic consequences for the community. Nubians are often unable to work in agriculture as they were forcibly moved from their old villages on the banks of Nile to desert areas which lack the necessary access to water and fertile soil.

The Egyptian Ministry of Education also does not allow schools in the far south of Egypt to teach the Nubian language despite the demands of Nubian residents. Nubian rights activist Fatma Emam told Amnesty International that the forced assimilation of Nubians in Arabic speaking communities has prevented the community from effectively maintaining its language.

In the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, Nubian activists grew more organized and vocal in articulating their demands. Their lobbying resulted in a new provision in the 2014 Egyptian Constitution that recognizes their right to return.

The 2014 Constitution recognizes the Nubians' "right to return" to their original lands. Article 236 obliges the government to design an economic development plan for marginalized border areas, including Nubia near Egypt's southern borders. The provision also obliges the government to carry out projects to facilitate the return of Nubians to their original lands and their development. However, the Egyptian government has not acted to implement this article.

Conditions of detention and medical negligence remain serious problems in Egyptian prisons. According to statistics gathered by El Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, at least 105 prisoners died in prison between January and October 2017, among them 41 as a result of medical neglect.

Name: Gamal Sorour
Gender m/f: m

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