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Free Al Jazeera journalist Hisham Abdel Aziz Gharib

Arab Organisation for Human Rights UK (AOHR UK) calls on the Egyptian regime to immediately free Al Jazeera journalist Hisham Abdel Aziz Gharib, who is being held at Tora Prison in Tora, Egypt, on false charges of belonging to a prohibited group.

Detention

Hisham has been in detention since **20th June 2019**, when he was arrested at Cairo International Airport, and is currently being held on a second round of allegations, having previously been “released” on 5 December 2019, his family having paid a fine, before vanishing once again until he was discovered to be at Tora Prison.

The 43-year-old father of three was based in Doha, where he worked for the Al Jazeera network as a journalist. He had moved there in 2013 but would travel to Egypt every summer for his annual leave.

In June 2019, Hisham was apprehended by an immigration officer at Cairo International Airport and taken to the National Security Office for interrogation, which lasted for five hours. His personal belongings were searched, including his phone, laptop, iPad and the passports and luggage of his family members. His passport was then confiscated, and



he was told that he and his family could leave, but that he must return to collect his passport from the National Security Office.

As soon as he arrived at his residence in Cairo, Hisham received a phone call from a national security officer. He was told to report immediately to the National Security Office, where he was told he would have his passport returned. If he did not do this, he was told, he could be arrested at his home - and he was warned that he would be monitored every ten minutes to ensure he was on his way.

Upon his arrival at the airport, security forces kidnapped him. His location was unknown to his family for the next three days. He then spent 15 days in solitary confinement before being transferred to the 5th District State Prosecutor's Office, where he spent three days without access to food or water and was denied use of the bathroom. His clothes and shoes were torn apart.

A prosecutor drafted a deposition and asked Hisham to sign it. Hisham inquired about the reasons behind his arrest, to which the prosecutor mockingly replied: "Can't you see that I am helping you here?". Hisham refused to sign the deposition, which led to the prosecutor verbally assaulting him and threatening his wife and children.

He then disappeared for some time before he was found to be being held at Tora Prison, accused under case number 1365 - belonging to a prohibited group.

He was held at Tora Prison until 5 December 2019, when a decision was made to release him on a 20,000 Egyptian Pound bail. But he was then taken to Hadaiq Al-Qubba police station and detained. Then, once again, Hisham went missing for a month before reappearing in Tora Prison on



the basis of new allegations, with a new investigation opened under case number 1956 /2019.

Medical urgency

AOHR UK understands that Hisham has had surgery previously for glaucoma in his right eye, and the condition has worsened since his detention. He also has severe calcification in the stapes bone of his ear, which requires medical treatment that is not possible in Tora Prison.

Despite requests from his family that he is allowed to leave the prison for medical treatment, it has been refused. He could lose both his sight and hearing without intervention.

Egypt's war on journalism

AOHR UK stated that Hisham's only crime was to be a journalist in a country that its regime that does not tolerate a free press. He must be released and allegations against him withdrawn.

AOHR UK condemns the Egyptian regime's ongoing war on journalists and their profession. Since 3rd July 2013, 250 media workers have been arrested - 34 of whom are still being held.

AOHR UK also demands an end to detention without trial, and that all journalists are released and pardoned for simply doing their job.

AOHR UK calls on the United Nations and other international bodies to put pressure on Egypt to release Hisham and provide him with the urgent medical treatment he needs.



Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK
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AOHR UK also demands that the international community calls on Egypt to respect the vital role played by journalists, to allow them to operate freely and to release all of those held on false charges.

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