#FreeSherifOsman: #UAE must not extradite political commentator to Egypt, where he would face torture

Joint Statements · Egypt · United Arab Emirates · 19 December 2022

We, the undersigned organisations, urge the authorities of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) not to deport Sherif Osman to Egypt, where he would be at high risk of being subjected to torture and other human rights violations. An extradition would constitute a violation of the principle of *non-refoulement* enshrined under article 3 of the Convention against Torture, to which the UAE is a party since 2012. We further urge the UAE to release Osman immediately.

Osman, a former Egyptian army officer, has been an outspoken critic of the Egyptian government, including on his YouTube channel. Osman is a dual citizen of the United States and Egypt, and he resides in Massachusetts; he traveled to Dubai for a family visit on November 4, 2022. Two days later, on November 6, he was outside a restaurant when two men dressed in civilian clothes and driving a black car approached him and asked him to follow them. He was detained at the Police Headquarters in Dubai before his transfer on November 8 to Dubai Central Prison, where he remains detained to date.

On November 8, the Public Prosecutor informed him that he was wanted by Egypt, while vaguely referring to Osman's videos dating back to 2019. However, as Osman had previously traveled to Dubai in 2020 and never faced arrest, his family believes his arrest to be in reprisal for calling for peaceful protests on November 11, 2022, during the visit of U.S. President Joe Biden to Egypt during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27).

Since his arrest, Osman has been denied the right to challenge the legality of his detention and has faced numerous impediments to his right to access a lawyer, who has yet to visit him in prison.

The Public Prosecution gave Egypt 30 days to submit a comprehensive extradition request. On November 30, Osman's detention was extended for another 30 days. Though he was initially informed that his arrest was based on a red notice issued by INTERPOL at Egypt's request, it was later clarified that the warrant was circulated through the Arab Interior Ministers Council, an institution of the Arab League.

The UAE and Egypt are both parties to the Riyadh Arab Agreement for Judicial Cooperation, which only forbids extraditions for "a crime of political nature", but does not take into account risks of torture in the requesting country.

Following the review of the UAE by the Committee against Torture in July 2022, UN experts urged the country to "[a]bide by its obligations under article 3 of the Convention and ensure

that, in law and in practice, no one may be expelled, returned or extradited to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be in danger of being subjected to torture or ill-treatment".

In this regard, it should be recalled that the practice of torture and other forms of ill-treatment are widespread in Egypt, including against opposition figures, critics, and peaceful protesters. In 2017, the UN Committee against Torture, found that the information provided by non-govermental organisations and United Nations sources, "lead to the inescapable conclusion that torture is a systematic practice in Egypt."

Osman being an outspoken critic of Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and having expressed opposition to his policies on his Youtube channel, he faces an increased risk and as such, the undersigned urge Emirati authorities to release him immediately and not deport him to Egypt.

Signatories:

ACAT-France

Access Now

ALQST for Human Rights

Amnesty International

Article 19

Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)

Association for Victims of Torture in UAE

CIVICUS

Committee for Justice (CFJ)

Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)

Detained International

Emirates Detainees Advocacy Centre (EDAC)

FairSquare

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The Freedom Initiative

Human Rights First

Human Rights Foundation (HRF)

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement

International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE (ICFUAE)

International Center for Justice and Human Rights (ICJHR)

MENA Rights Group

REDRESS Trust

Rights Realization Centre

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