

GHENT UNIVERSITY DEMANDS THE RELEASE OF AHMED SAMIR SANTAWY

In January 2021, Ahmed Sami Santawy, a student at the Central European University in Vienna, was arrested during a short family visit in Cairo, Egypt. Ahmed is the partner of Souheila Yildiz, a Ghent University alumna.

On June 22, 2021, Ahmed was sentenced to four years imprisonment for spreading fake news and inciting hatred, based on his posts on social media criticizing government policies, including human rights abuses and the handling of the covid-19 pandemic in Egypt. However, the posts on social media do not in any way incite to hatred or violence.

Egypt is currently under a state of emergency, which has been declared since 2017 and has been renewed every three months. During this state of emergency, specially erected courts can sentence people without the possibility of appeal. The execution of the sentence is in the hands of the Egyptian president.

Ahmed's conviction has been met with disbelief [by many international and academic organizations](#). Ghent University is also calling on the Egyptian authorities to quash Ahmed's conviction and release him so that he can return to his family and continue his studies. To this end, a letter was sent to the president of Egypt and the Egyptian ambassador in Belgium.

Background information:

- [Amnesty International: Egypt: Master's student sentenced to four years in prison for publishing 'false news'](#)
- [Human Rights Watch: Egypt: Scholar Unjustly Detained](#)
- [Middle East Studies Association: Human Rights Organizations Call on President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to Quash Ahmed Samir Santawy's Verdict](#)