

Egypt urged to free prominent couple jailed arbitrarily since last June: UN rights office

The UN human rights office is urging Egypt to free a prominent married couple that has been arbitrarily detained for more than a year.

Ola Al-Qaradawi and her husband Hosam Khalaf, both in their 50s, were arrested at their vacation home in Alexandria on 30 June 2017, allegedly for their affiliation with the banned Muslim Brotherhood organization and for terrorist activities.

We call on Egypt to release all those arbitrarily detained in the country unconditionally – *Liz Throssell (OHCHR)*

Ms. Al-Qaradawi is the daughter of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading Islamic scholar and member of the outlawed group, who lives in exile in Qatar.

She has been held in solitary confinement “in one of the worst prisons in Egypt”, the UN human rights office said on Tuesday. Her husband is being held in similar conditions in a different prison, according to media reports.

Ms. Al-Qaradawi has been denied visits from her family and lawyers, and recently began a hunger strike in protest.

“We understand that Ola Al-Qaradawi’s health is frail and deteriorating and urge the authorities to ensure that her right to health and to physical and psychological integrity is respected,” Liz Throssell, spokesperson for the UN human rights office, told journalists in Geneva.

“We call on Egypt to release all those arbitrarily detained in the country unconditionally.”

In June, a UN-mandated body issued a [decision](#) determining that Ms. Al-Qaradawi and her husband had been arbitrarily arrested, and called for their immediate release.

The [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) also determined that repeated renewals of 45-day detention orders against them resulted in ongoing violations of their rights to fair trial and due process.

Furthermore, Ms. Al-Qaradawi’s prolonged solitary confinement could also amount to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The decision stated that “The Working Group cannot but conclude that Ms. al-Qaradawi and Mr. Khalaf have been arrested and detained for their family ties

with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. This is the only plausible explanation for the subversion of the equal protection of the law they experienced”.