



5.6.2020

EGYPT | Activist's Detention Extended

The Egyptian authorities have extended the detention of prominent Coptic human rights defender Rami Kamil for a further 45 days. The extension occurred on May 4 and in the absence of Kamil and his lawyers. CSW's sources report that Kamil's lawyers are preparing to submit an appeal on May 7.

Kamil is a civil society and human rights activist. In 2011, he founded the Maspero Youth Union following the infamous Maspero Massacre in which 27 Christians were killed by the Egyptian military as they peacefully protested the demolition of a church in Aswan.

Kamil was arrested in a police raid on his house in Cairo during the early hours of Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019. Following his arrest, he was taken to an unknown location where he underwent intensive interrogation and was subjected to threats and intimidation. Kamil was subsequently accused of joining a terrorist organization, receiving foreign funding, disturbing public order, inciting the public against the state, and using social media to incite sectarian tensions between Muslims and Christians. His detention has been extended on multiple occasions, and CSW's sources reported in March 2020 that the security services were targeting his friends, lawyers and supporters with threats and harassment.

According to credible sources, intelligence officers have asked Kamil to stop writing about violations of freedom of religion or belief if he wants to be released.

Kamil is being currently held in Tora Prison in Cairo, which is notorious for its overcrowded and unsatisfactory conditions. On May 2, rights lawyers reported that Egyptian filmmaker Shady Habash had died in the prison. Habash had been imprisoned for making a music video that mocked President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and had been in Tora for over two years. Furthermore, prominent activist Alaa Abdel al-Fattah, who was re-imprisoned in September 2019, recently began a hunger strike in protest at conditions in the prison.

As concerns rise regarding the potential spread of COVID-19 in Egypt's prisons, there are serious fears for Kamil's health. He suffers from chronic asthma, which renders him extremely vulnerable.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW is deeply disappointed by news that Mr. Kamil's detention has been extended once again. The charges levelled against him are excessive and his detention lacks transparency. We urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Kamil, and all others who are currently detained on charges relating to their peaceful defense of human rights. We also call upon the Egyptian administration to accelerate efforts to reform and improve the situation of freedom of religion or belief in the country, and to offset the spread of COVID-19 by releasing vulnerable, non-violent and low-risk prisoners from pre-trial detention."