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Police crackdown on members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light

Halt arbitrary arrest, disappearance and threatened deportation of Ahmadi minority members, Amnesty says

[Amnesty International](#) (08.04.2025) - The Egyptian authorities must stop all plans to forcibly return a Syrian asylum seeker who is at risk of deportation to Syria as early as tomorrow and end their ongoing crackdown on members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light, Amnesty International and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) said today.

Between 8 and 14 March 2025, Amnesty International and EIPR documented the arbitrary detention of at least four members of the religious minority solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of religion. The men, who include two Syrian brothers registered as asylum seekers with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), were detained at their homes in three different governorates. Three of them were subsequently subjected to enforced disappearance with their fate and whereabouts currently unknown, while one man remains held incommunicado (i.e. without any contact with the outside world).

“It is outrageous that these men have been targeted and forcibly disappeared simply for not espousing state-sanctioned religious beliefs. The Egyptian authorities have legal obligations to respect and protect the right to freedom of religion of everyone in the country which includes those with religious beliefs not recognized by the state,” said Mahmoud Shalaby, Egypt and Libya Researcher at Amnesty International.

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Mahmoud Shalaby, Researcher

“Instead of arbitrarily detaining and forcibly disappearing people for exercising their religious beliefs or threatening to deport them, the Egyptian authorities should immediately disclose the men’s fate and whereabouts and unconditionally release them.”

Among those targeted is Ahmed Al-Tanawi, a 28-year-old Syrian asylum seeker registered with UNHCR, who is at imminent risk of deportation to Syria. The security situation in Syria remains volatile and Amnesty International continues to oppose forced returns to the country.

The latest crackdown on members of the Ahmadi religious minority was triggered when a member of the religious group hung a banner advertising an Ahmadi TV channel on a

pedestrian bridge in Giza in early March. Amnesty International and EIPR reviewed a photograph of the banner hanging on the bridge, which showed the frequency of “Mahdi Has Appeared” (*Zahra al-Mahdi*), a TV channel affiliated with the Ahmadi religion and featured a photo of its leader.

On 8 March 2025, security forces arrested the individual who hung the banner. He was released later that day without charge, according to Imran Ali, the United Kingdom-based bishop of the Ahmadi religion in Egypt and another Ahmadi man who was in touch with the individual after his release. It appears that the security forces identified three of the Ahmadi men after searching his phone and finding a Telegram group for members of the religious group in Egypt, of which the three of were members, according to Imran Ali and the men’s relatives.

On 11 March, police officers in plain clothes arrested Ahmed Al-Tanawi and his brother, Hussein Mohammed Hassan Al-Tanawi, also an asylum seeker registered with UNHCR, at their house in 6th of October City in Giza governorate, without presenting an arrest warrant, according to a family member. Ahmed remains held incommunicado at the 6th of October First Police Station, while Hussein’s fate and whereabouts remain unknown. On 15 March, a police officer informally told EIPR’s lawyer that Ahmed was accused of “membership in a terrorist organization”.

On 25 March, Hussein’s family submitted a complaint to the public prosecution, which was reviewed by Amnesty International and EIPR, to inquire about his whereabouts. The family has yet to receive a response.

Amnesty International and EIPR learned that on 13 March, authorities transferred Ahmed Al-Tanawi to the General Administration of Passports, Immigration and Nationality in Abbasyia neighbourhood in Cairo, where officials coerced him into signing documents apparently related to his deportation, without allowing him to review them. On 6 April, police forced Ahmed Al-Tanawi’s family to purchase a ticket for him to Syria, threatening to deprive him of medication for his heart condition. His flight is scheduled for early tomorrow morning, according to his family.

On 10 March, security forces arrested Omar Mahmoud Abdelmaguid Mohamed Ibrahim, another member of the Ahmadi religious minority, following a violent raid on his home in Cairo. His fate and whereabouts remain unknown. A member of Omar’s family said that since the arrest, his house has been under constant police surveillance. Police officers searched the house again on the same day to arrest Omar’s brother-in-law, Hazem Saied Mohamed Abd El-Moatamed, who had fled. However, he was arrested three days later, on 13 March, in 10th of Ramadan City in Sharqia Governorate, according to one of his relatives. He remains forcibly disappeared. He remains forcibly disappeared.

Amnesty International and EIPR reviewed copies of complaints submitted by family members of Omar Mahmoud Abdelmaguid Mohamed Ibrahim and Hazem Saied Mohamed Abd El-Moatamed to the prosecution on 25 March, inquiring about their whereabouts. To date, the family has not received a response.

In separate incidents, at least four other members of the religious minority were arrested throughout March, with their fate and whereabouts currently unknown, according to Imran Ali. He said that three of them messaged him to say they were about to be arrested. He has not heard back from them since.

Background

Religious minorities including Coptic Christians, Shi'a Muslims and Bahá'ís consistently face discrimination in law and/or practice in Egypt. Members of religious minorities, atheists and others not espousing state-sanctioned religious beliefs are summoned and questioned by the National Security Agency or otherwise threatened or harassed, including by their educational institutions and online.

HRWF Footnote

The Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light (AROPL) is a Shia-derivative new religious movement which was founded in 1999 in the chaotic post-Saddam Iraq by [Ahmed al-Hassan](#), a civil engineer born in 1968 in Basra. He claimed to have physically met the Twelfth Imam, who had entrusted him with a special mission. The movement soon expanded to other countries with Sunni or Shia majority populations. It is headed by the Egyptian American national Abdullah Hashem Aba Al-Sadiq and follows the teachings of Imam Ahmed al-Hassan as its divine guide.

The new religious movement is not to be confused with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community heavily persecuted in Pakistan, which was founded in the 19th century by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908) within a Sunni context.

More reading

[MOROCCO: Two young members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light arrested](#)

[AZERBAIJAN: Report on the persecution of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light](#)

[THAILAND persecutes the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light. Why?](#)

[ALGERIA: Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light people meet UN Special Rapporteur](#)

[MALAYSIA: A "heretic" sentenced to 6 months in prison and a fine](#)

Christian convert from Islam freed after over 3 years in detention

Abdulbaqi Saeed Abdo, father of five, released from prison this month, with support from ADF International

ADF International (02.02.2025) - The father of 5 imprisoned for participating in a private Facebook group about converting to Christianity from Islam has been freed from detention after 3 years – but his case remains open.

[Abdulbaqi Saeed Abdo](#), originally from Yemen, was part of a Christian Facebook group that discussed Islamic theology and apologetics. In 2021, Abdo was arrested while he was living

as a UNHCR-registered asylum seeker in Egypt. He had originally fled to Egypt because he faced death threats in Yemen after converting to Christianity.

He was moved between several detention centers throughout his three years of imprisonment, even undergoing a hunger strike within his final six months in an act of desperation. The husband and father of five suffered from poor health in relation to his heart, liver, and kidneys.

"I endured many hardships in prison. It isn't right that a government should tear me away from my family, keep me in these awful conditions, only because of the faith in which I peacefully choose to believe.

"I thank everyone who prayed for me while I was in prison, cared about and followed up on my case, and shared the joy of my release from prison," commented Abdo upon his release.

Abdo's son, Husam Baqi, added:

"It is hideous that individuals are not allowed to believe and express their beliefs freely and are imprisoned or killed for their faith."

"This case shows the extremity of unchecked government censorship in the online age."

- Abdulbaqi Saeed Abdo

Abdo continues to fight his open legal battle with support from ADF International, who helped secure his release by submitting his case to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

A Global Trend of Online Censorship

Commenting on the case, [Kelsey Zorzi](#), Director of Advocacy for Religious Freedom for ADF International, said:

"The arbitrary detention of this husband and father without a criminal trial, and the lack of an opportunity for him to defend himself against alleged offenses, constitutes a severe violation of human rights.

"The peaceful expression of one's religious convictions cannot a crime – not in Egypt, nor anywhere else in the world. This case shows the extremity of unchecked government censorship in the online age. The world must take note."

Support from around the World

While Abdo suffered in prison, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, described his unfair treatment as "grotesque".

"The imprisonment of Yemeni refugee Abdulbaqi Saeed Abdo at the hands of Egyptian authorities is a surreal example of censorial blasphemy policies in action," she said.

Previously a prominent atheist, Ali announced in November that she was converting to Christianity. Because of her outspoken rhetoric against the Muslim Brotherhood, she faces constant death threats.

"This is the logical conclusion to a trend that empowers authorities to brutalize innocent people for free expression on social media. From China to Pakistan, from Russia to Syria, from the UK to Egypt—free speech must urgently be defended from our age's resurgent Stalinism," she added.
