

Subject: Petition in support of Mr. Patrick George Zaki

Your Excellency,

I am writing on behalf of the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI), to express grave concern for Patrick George Zaki, a postgraduate student at the University of Bologna who was arrested on February 7, 2020, and afterwards allegedly subjected to torture, in apparent retaliation for his activity as a researcher. Mr. Zaki is a twenty-eight year old Egyptian student who came to Italy in August 2019, to pursue a master's degree on Gender Studies at the University of Bologna. Moreover, he is a researcher for the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), an organization based in Cairo committed to defending Human Rights.

CRUI is gravely concerned about the decision taken by the Egyptian Court on the 7th December 2020 to extend the pre-trial detention for another 45 days, and deeply feels its responsibility towards students who pursue their research projects with enthusiasm and commitment. We understand from Scholars at Risk and Amnesty International that the health situation of Mr. Zaki is seriously compromised by the harsh conditions in which he is currently detained while awaiting for trial.

Mr. Zaki suffers from asthma, and he is at particular risk if exposed to COVID-19 in the Tora Prison. In a December 12, 2020, letter to his family, Mr. Zaki expressed that he has serious backpain and his mental health is deteriorating. We would therefore like to appeal to your clemency on this serious matter, and more broadly to the humanitarian concern that we all share in this health-emergency situation.

CRUI respectfully urge you to grant Mr. Zaki the permission to wait for his trial at home with his family, where he could also recover from the physical suffering after many months of detention. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and we trust your understanding and sympathy for the dispassionate motives that guide us all.

Sincerely,
Prof. Ferruccio Resta