

f r e e d o m

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ADVOCACY REPORT

PATRICK GEORGE ZAKI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the 2023 UiO and Scholars at Risk advocacy campaign was to raise awareness of the situation of Patrick Zaki, a student and human rights activist who has been held in detention in Egypt since 2020. The campaign sought to contextualise Zaki's plight within a broader framework, emphasising his struggle for liberty as a component of a wider endeavour to combat human rights abuses in Egypt.

The campaign was composed of four main strategies. These included leveraging existing momentum by establishing a global network of activists, utilising the Transparency Act to acquire information from Norwegian companies operating in Egypt, engaging with government officials and human rights organisations in Norway, and disseminating a digital pamphlet.

The efficacy of the campaign was demonstrated through the establishment of a network of activists and successful collaboration with various stakeholders and organisations, including Scholars at Risk. The team has made significant strides in collecting data from Norwegian enterprises in Egypt, engaging with governmental authorities and institutions in Norway, and distributing an electronic brochure.

Despite the campaign's limited resources and brief timeframe, it was able to achieve noteworthy outcomes by enhancing the case's visibility among influential stakeholders in Norway and beyond. The collective anticipates that forthcoming scholars will persist in fortifying the web of individuals and organisations involved in the Patrick Zaki case, and sustain the endeavours aimed at ensuring his liberation.

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1. ZAKI CASE TIMELINE

Below is a timeline for the development of the Zaki case, from August 2017 up until today:

August 2017 – Zaki joins Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights as a full-time capacity as a gender and human rights researcher¹.

2019 – Zaki started a master's degree in Gender and Women studies at the University of Bologna Italy².

February 7, 2020 – Egyptian National Security Agency arrested Zaki in Cairo International Airport. Zaki endured a 17–20-hour interrogation at the airport with NSA officers, he has allegedly been tortured, beaten and electrocuted³.

February 8, 2020 – Zaki is taken to the public prosecutor's office in Mansoura. A police report is issued saying that Zaki was arrested at home in Mansoura for charges going from 2019. Zaki is placed in a 15-day detention in Tora Prison pending further investigation. change.org petition is started, currently 257,757 supporters⁴.

February 9, 2020 – Patrick's friends and family demand his release, dropped charges, a transparent investigation around his arrest and torture, stopping the harassment and allowing him to continue his studies. Bologna Italy protests ensue.

February 10, 2020 – David Sassoli (European Parliament President) asked for the High Representatives to demand Zaki's release from Egyptian authorities⁵.

February 11, 2020 – Granada Spain protests ensue⁶. The Bologna City Council drafted an action plan for the Italian government⁷.

February 12, 2020 – European Parliament President David Sassoli reiterated the High Representatives' call for Zaki's release. If Zaki and other activists are not released, Egypt-

¹ The Left Berlin. *Background info & timeline: Freedom for Patrick* (The Left Berlin, Feb 15, 2020)

² Ruth Michaelson & Lorenzo Tondo, *Italy alarmed after Egyptian studying in Bologna arrested in Cairo* (The Guardian, Feb 9, 2020)

³ Amnesty International, *Egypt: Arbitrary arrest and torture of researcher studying gender in Italy* (Feb 10, 2020.)

⁴ change.org, *Pressure the Egyptian Government to release the student "Patrick George Zaki" (2021)*

⁵ Young European Federalists – Ignazio Pardo. *EU-EGYPT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WAKE OF THE ZAKI CASE* (July 18, 2020)

⁶ Scholars at Risk, *University of Granada Rector Pilar Aranda UGR called on the Spanish and Italian governments, the European Commission and higher education institutions to join in protest to ensure Patrick George Zaki's safe release.* (Facebook, July 1, 2020)

⁷ Scholars at Risk, *University of Granada Rector Pilar Aranda UGR called on the Spanish and Italian governments, the European Commission and higher education institutions to join in protest to ensure Patrick George Zaki's safe release.* (Facebook, July 1, 2020)

Europe trade should be suspended. The Italian government and EU were urged to free Zaki by Bologna University. Bologna protesters sit-in.⁸

February 13, 2020 – Amnesty International issues an urgent action article⁹.

February 14, 2020 – Egyptian Head of House Representative (Ali Abdel Aal) issues a statement rejecting the European Parliaments demands and claims¹⁰.

March 10, 2020 – Egyptian authorities suspend prison visits due to COVID. Zaki is high risk with asthma. This violates international law OHCHR Article 42 of the Prisons Regulation Act.¹¹

March 26, 2020 – Amnesty International issues a second urgent action article¹².

March 31, 2020 – OHCHR issues a human rights appeal¹³.

May 5, 2020 – Supreme State Security Prosecutors (SSSP)/Criminal Court renews 15-day detention without Zaki or his lawyer there. Amnesty International issues a statement in rebuttal¹⁴.

June 4, 2020 – Egyptian President (al-Sisi) announced the pardoning of 168 prisoners because of COVID¹⁵ (Zaki was not included despite outcry from the university of Bologna)¹⁶.

September 12, 2020 – Bologna University (Rector Francesco Ubertini) issued a statement asking for the release of Zak¹⁷;

October 1, 2020 – 26 Italian members of European Parliament wrote a letter to the Italian ambassador in Cairo (Giampaolo Cantini) asking for Zaki's release¹⁸.

October 7, 2020 – SSSP/Criminal Court extends detention 45 days¹⁹.

⁸ Universidad de Granada, *Statement by the GEMMA Consortium on Patrick George Zaki's situation* (Feb 12, 2020).

⁹ Amnesty International, *EGYPT: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED AND TORTURED: PATRICK ZAKI GEORGE* (Feb 13, 2020).

¹⁰ Ahramonline – Gamal Essam El-Din *Outrage over EU parliament's comments* (Feb 18, 2020).

¹¹ UN OHCHR, *Imprisoned human rights defenders in Egypt at grave risk of COVID-19, say UN human rights experts* (24 August 2020)

¹² Amnesty International, *HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED AND TORTURED* (2020)

¹³ UN OHCHR, *REFERENCE: UA EGY 6/2020* (March 31, 2020)

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *EGYPT: FURTHER INFORMATION: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED AND TORTURED: PATRICK ZAKI GEORGE* May 11, 2020.

¹⁵ Egypt today, *168 Egyptian inmates released per presidential pardon* (Jun 4, 2020).

¹⁶ Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies. *GEMMA student Patrick Zaki arrested in Egypt*

¹⁷

¹⁸ Eunews – Federico Baccini, *Ventisei eurodeputati chiedono un "impegno deciso" dell'Italia per la liberazione di Patrick Zaki* (Oct 1, 2020)

¹⁹ Amnesty Italy, *Free Patrick Zaki, le iniziative a Roma e Milano. Confermata la detenzione per altri 45 giorni* (Oct 7, 2020).

November 25, 2020 – The UN mandate of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention mention Zaki’s case in its communication²⁰.

November 27, 2020 – The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention calls for Zaki’s immediate release, stating that his detention is arbitrary and violates international law²¹.

December 2, 2020 – Huda Nasraallah (Zaki’s lawyer) is able to visit him in prison for the first time²².

December 6, 2020 – SSSP/Criminal Court extends detention 45 days²³ (November 19, 2020, other EIPR members were arrested [Gasser Abdel-Razek] but were released on December 3, 2020, due to international pressure)²⁴.

December 16, 2020 – The European Parliament ‘Resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)’ is issued²⁵.

December 17, 2020 – Soraya Rodríguez and Cseh Katalin make a statement supporting Zaki in the European Parliament²⁶.

December 18, 2020 – The Italian foreign minister (Di Maio) declares that Zaki’s case is Italy’s jurisdiction²⁷.

December 21, 2020 – The Italian Conference of Rectors (CRUI) petitioned Egyptian president (al-Sisi) to allow Zaki to await trial in his home²⁸.

December 24, 2020 – Scholars at Risk send a letter to Egyptian authorities advocating for Zaki’s release²⁹.

January 6, 2021 – The Italian Association of Political Communication issued a letter to Egyptian authorities asking for the release of Zaki³⁰.

²⁰UN OHCHR *REFERENCE: AL EGY 15/2020*

²¹ UN OHCHR, *UN experts call for release of Egyptian human rights defenders jailed after meeting diplomats* (27 November 2020).

²² Patrick Libero (Facebook Newsfeed, Dec 2, 2020)

²³ AP News, *Rights group: Egyptian court extends activist’s detention* (Dec 7, 2020.)

²⁴ Deutsche Welle – Tom Allinson, *Egypt escalates campaign of arrests after activists meet foreign diplomats* (Nov 20, 2020).

²⁵ European Parliament, *JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION* (Dec 16, 2020)

²⁶ European Parliament, *Debates 8.1. The deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)* (Dec 17, 2020).

²⁷ European Parliament, *Texts adopted: The deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)* (Dec 18, 2020).

²⁸ Sapienza Università di Roma. *One year after Patrick Zaki’s arrest, the Main Campus’s propylaea turn yellow* (Feb 2, 2021).

²⁹ Ibid 1.

January 12, 2021 – The city council of Bologna grants Zaki honorary citizenship (symbolic)³¹.

January 17, 2021 – SSSP/Criminal Court extends detention 15 days (10-hour hearing)³².

January 22, 2021 – UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, Ms Mary Lawlor issues a statement condemning Zaki's imprisonment³³.

February 1, 2021 – SSSP/Criminal Court extends detention 45 days (representatives from the American, Italian and Danish embassies attended)³⁴.

February 7, 2021 – 1-year anniversary of imprisonment³⁵.

February 8, 2021 – Bologna University starts a campaign for Zaki to receive honorary Italian citizenship in 100 cities³⁶.

February 10, 2021 – The University of Bologna named a library room after him³⁷.

February 14, 2021 – The Mayor of Lecce Carlo Salvimini granted Zaki honorary citizenship (symbolic)³⁸.

February 18, 2021 – Zaki is now an honorary citizen of the San Giorgio Lucano county in Italy (symbolic)³⁹.

February 28, 2021 – Egyptian Terrorism Department renewed the pre-trial detention of Zaki for another 45 days⁴⁰.

April 14, 2021 – Senate in Italy voted in favour of urging the government to grant Zaki Italian citizenship⁴¹.

September 13, 2021 – The Mansoura II State Security Misdemeanours Court heard Zaki's first trial on September 14. The SSSP indicted him under criminal code articles 80 (D) and 102 (bis). The indictment is based on Zaki's July 2019 Daraj essay "Displacement, Killing

³⁰ Poster for Tomorrow, *FREE PATRICK ZAKI PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE*

³¹ Università di Bologna, *Patrick Zaki: We are waiting for Patrick, we will continue to support him and to ask for justice and freedom* (Sep 28, 2020).

³² Corriere – Marta Serafini, *Patrick Zaki resta in carcere in Egitto: altri 15 giorni di reclusione* (Jan 19 2021)

³³ Ibid 22.

³⁴ Ibid 19.

³⁵ Ibid 32.

³⁶ Patrick Libero (Facebook Newsfeed, Feb 10, 2021).

³⁷ Patrick Libero (Facebook Newsfeed, Feb 14, 2021)

³⁸

³⁹ Patrick Libero (Facebook Newsfeed, Feb 18, 2021).

⁴⁰ La Repubblica, *Patrick Zaki, altri 45 giorni di carcere. Amnesty: "Così sconterà due anni* (March 1, 2021).

⁴¹ Middle East Eye, *Italy's senate votes to give citizenship to jailed Egyptian activist Patrick Zaki* (April 14, 2021)

and Restriction: A week's diaries of Egypt's Copts." The article describes Zaki's Coptic Egyptian life.⁴²

September 14, 2021 – Zaki's trial is postponed to September 28. If convicted, Zaki will not be able to appeal the verdict and will only be released on a pardon by President al-Sisi⁴³.

September 17, 2021 – The Italian Foreign Minister, Luigi Di Maio, called for a speedy trial and said that Italy activated its embassy in Cairo as well as other European embassies to follow up on the verdict of the trial⁴⁴

September 28, 2021 – At the second session of Zaki's trial on September 28, Zaki's lawyer asked for a postponement in order to study a certified copy of the documents, which was not provided to the lawyer before. The trial is postponed to December 7. Diplomats from Italy, Canada, and Spain were present as part of EU trial monitoring⁴⁵ .. If convicted, Zaki faces up to five years in prison⁴⁶(Foreign Brief).

October 5, 2021 – President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi released a human rights strategy, which outlines the government's plan to safeguard civil, political, social, economic, and human rights over the next five years. Human rights lawyers and activists see the strategy as a tool they could use to hold government officials accountable⁴⁷ .

October 25, 2021 – President al-Sisi announced an end to extending the state of emergency, which started in 2017. The decision to end the state of emergency will also result in the termination of the work of Supreme State Security Courts; however, the courts will continue to hear all cases that have already been referred to it by the Public Prosecution before the decision to lift the emergency state.⁴⁸ This includes Zaki's case.

December 7, 2021 – The Second Division Mansoura Emergency State Security Misdemeanor Court ordered the release of Patrick George Zaki pending trial. The court postponed Zaki's trial to February 1⁴⁹.

⁴² EIPR, *After 19 months of Pre-trial Detention, Patrick Zaki's Trial Begins Tomorrow before Emergency Court* (13.September 2021)

⁴³ Askaneews, *Il processo per Patrick Zaki è stato aggiornato al 28 settembre* (SET 14, 2021)

⁴⁴ Alhmjhar, *The Italian Foreign Minister hopes for a speedy trial in Egypt that will lead to the release of researcher Patrick George Zaki*. (17 September 2021)

⁴⁵ Huffpost, *Processo a Patrick Zaki, rinvio al 7/12. In manette in Aula, due minuti di udienza*, (28 September 2021)

⁴⁶ Foreign Brief, *Trial of human rights activist Patrick George Zaki to resume* (28 September 2021).

⁴⁷ State information service, *Sisi: Launching national strategy for human rights milestone in Egypt's history*, (11 September 2021)

⁴⁸ Reuters, *Egypt's President Sisi ends state of emergency for the first time in years* October 26, 2021

⁴⁹ AP News, *Egypt court orders release of rights activist pending trial*, December 7, 2021

December 8, 2021 – Zaki is released from detention pending trial after nearly two years in custody⁵⁰. He was reunited with his mother, sister, and girlfriend.

January 28, 2022 – SAR calls on the international community to support Patrick George Zaki before his trial on February 1⁵¹.

February 1, 2022 – The Emergency State Security Court postponed Mr. Zaki’s trial to April 6, 2022⁵².

April 6, 2022 – Patrick George Zaki's trial was postponed again to June 21, 2022⁵³.

June 24, 2022 – In a Facebook post, Patrick Zaki shared his frustration regarding his continued travel ban and how it has inhibited his ability to present at lectures, including a meeting with UNESCO on international education and global citizenship⁵⁴.

December 1, 2022 – Rome made Patrick Zaki an honorary citizen⁵⁵.

February 28, 2023 – Hearing in Egypt, the defense had 30 minutes to present the case, the court in Mansour failed to give a verdict and set May 9 as the date for another hearing.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Frontline Defenders, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER PATRICK GEORGE ZAKI RELEASED FROM DETENTION (2021)

⁵¹ Scholars at Risk, *Support Patrick George Zaki before his February 1 trial!* (January 28, 2022)

⁵² Scholars at Risk, *Free Egyptian Scholars Ahmed Samir Santawy and Patrick George Zaki!* (Feb. 1 2022).

⁵³ Mada Masr, *Researcher Patrick Zaki's trial postponed amid legal challenges to constitutionality of ongoing emergency trials* (April 6 2022)

⁵⁴ Patrick Zaki (facebook Newsfeed, 24 Juni 2022)

⁵⁵ Wanted in Rome, *Rome makes Patrick Zaki an honorary citizen* (2022)

⁵⁶ *Ansamed Egypt's trial against Zaki adjourned again* (28 february 2023)

2. INTRODUCTION

Patrick Zaki's situation serves as a tragic reminder of Egypt's continuing fight for justice and human rights, where human rights advocates are subjected to repression and persecution for their advocacy. Young human rights scholar Zaki, who was studying in Italy for a master's degree in gender and women studies, was detained upon his arrival in Egypt in February 2020. Since then, he has experienced a number of human rights violations, such as claimed torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, and refusal of access to medical care, as well as his detention being repeatedly renewed.

The chronology of what happened in Zaki's case shows how his detention was arbitrary and how severely his rights were violated while he was being held. Zaki is still in detention and is being held on charges related to his work as a human rights advocate and social media activism despite widespread international condemnation and demands for his release. The accusations have drawn harsh condemnation from human rights groups and activists who view them as politically motivated, politically motivated, and designed to silence dissent and stifle criticism of the government.

Supporters from all over the world have started numerous petitions and demonstrations in response to Zaki's case, requesting his release and the dismissal of the charges brought against him. Human rights groups and activists have also urged the Egyptian government to stop its crackdown on civil society and respect the rights of all human rights defenders.

Zaki's story serves as an example of the larger fight for justice and human rights in Egypt, where those who defend human rights are subjected to repression and persecution for their advocacy, and where the freedoms of speech and peaceful assembly are severely restricted. Whether the Egyptian government will honor its responsibilities under international human rights law and respect the basic rights of all its citizens, including human rights advocates, remains to be seen as Zaki's trial progresses.

3. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EGYPT

3.1. The Egyptian government's crackdown on human rights

Egypt became independent in the 1920s after being under control of the British rule for many years. After the independence, Egypt has undergone great political and societal changes, and has been subject to several different regimes. In 2011, the Arab Spring led to large protests across the whole MEA-region. The protests were a response to the high prices on food, large unemployment rates and authoritarian regimes that were not fit to meet the people's demands. Even though the Arab spring also reached Egypt, it had a different development than in other countries in the region. In January 2011 demonstrations took place at Tahir-square in Kairo, which was met with brutal violence from the regime and pro-regime demonstrators. Eventually the protests led to President Mubarak's resignation, and he was replaced by a temporary transition-council. In this period there more room was created for the development of a more democratic society, and there public got a sense of freedom and somewhat free elections.

This sense of freedom did not last for long. Mohamed Morsi had been elected president in 2012 and had granted himself power to create laws without judicial control and even made changes to the constitution. This led to demonstrators demanding his resignation, and in 2013 the army chief general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi led a military-led coalition which removed him from power.⁵⁷ The armed forces also suspended the constitution and dissolved the upper house of parliament.⁵⁸ In 2014 President Sisi was officially elected president with 97% of the votes, which repeated itself in the election in 2018.⁵⁹ After the reelection, the government continued to silence critics through arrests and unfair prosecutions of journalists, and restrictive laws that further limit the freedom of speech and access to information.⁶⁰

On September 11th, 2021, Egypt launched the National Strategy for Human Rights. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) views this document as a quintessential embodiment of the official and chronic denial of the human rights crisis in Egypt.⁶¹ During the year 2022, peaceful dissent was still not possible. Journalists were arbitrarily detained under charges of "spreading false news", "misusing social media" and "terrorism". Human rights defenders were arbitrarily detained, and staff of NGOs subjected to investigations, travel bans

⁵⁷ "History of Egypt", accessed 10th April 2023,

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?gtrack=pthc&ParagraphID=ppv>

⁵⁸ "Egypt", accessed 10th April, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2017>

⁵⁹ John Davison, Ahmed Tolba, "Egypt's Sisi wins 97 percent in election with no real opposition", accessed 10th April, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-election-result-idUSKCN1H916>

⁶⁰ "Egypt Events of 2018", accessed 10th April, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/egypt>

⁶¹ Egypt: Human rights catastrophe results from lack of political will, not lack of a national strategy to whitewash reality, CIHRS, Sept. 13, 2021

and asset freezes. More than 2500 suspected critics of the government were arrested and interrogated by the Supreme State Security Prosecution. Security forces subjected hundreds of people to enforced disappearance, sometimes for months, and the prosecutors regularly avoided ordering investigations born from the complaints of such disappearances.⁶² Still, The Presidential Pardons Committee was reactivated and more than 800 people held for political reasons were released.

In addition to low tolerance for critique against the regime, are also other aspects of society that has been subject to criminalization. One example of this is the efforts to restrict sexual minorities rights. Egyptian law does not explicitly criminalize same sex sexual activity, but nevertheless people have been arrested on charges such as debauchery, prostitution, and violating family values. Egyptian law provides prison for up to 10 years for charges like these. In addition, authorities have not taken in use anti-discrimination laws to protect LGBTIQI+ individuals from legal discrimination and social stigma, and there are many obstacles for organizing and advocating for this cause. These obstacles also exist when trying to advocate on behalf of women's rights and equality.⁶³

3.2. Legal Consequences of State of Emergency in Egypt

Egypt has a long history of employing emergency and exceptional laws that impact the rights and protections of individuals. The 2014 Egyptian constitution stipulates that the President may proclaim a state of emergency after consulting with the council of ministers and that the declaration must be reviewed by the House of Representatives within seven days. Under emergency law no. 162/1958, police powers are expanded, constitutional rights are suspended, special tribunals are established in which civilians may be judged by the military, censorship is legalised, habeas corpus is abolished, and public demonstrations are restricted.⁶⁴

On the 31st of May 2012. the state of emergency ended in Egypt, according to decree No. 126/2010, the last one of President Mubarak in that regard. That was the first time that Egypt was out of the state of emergency for more than 30 years. On August 24th, 2013, the emergency was reinstated and lasted for 90 days. The Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi once again declared the state of emergency that was approved by the Council of Ministers on April 10th,

⁶² "Egypt 2022", accessed 10th April, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/>

⁶³ "2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt", accessed 10th April, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/egypt>

⁶⁴ "The state of emergency in Egypt: An exception or rule?", accessed 10th April, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-state-of-emergency-in-egypt-an-exception-or-rule/>

2017, through decree 157/2017, stating the necessity of continue with the state of emergency that has been approved by the Council of Ministers and reviewed by the House of Representatives several times.

The President suspended the State of Emergency on October 25th, 2021. Nevertheless, at the same time, some laws were modified in order to produce some of the effects that are proper to a state of emergency. These laws entered into force on November 23rd, 2021.⁶⁵

The Art. 53 of the Counter Terrorism Law provides that the president, in the event of the threat of a terrorist crime or ensuing environmental disasters, can take measures to maintain public security and order, including by quarantining or evacuating some areas or imposing a curfew in them for a maximum period of six months that is renewable, while Egypt's constitution establishes a maximum period of emergency of three months.

The Law No. 136/2014 was also modified, allowing the army to help the police to protect vital and public facilities without a time frame, and allowing civilians to be judged by military courts for offences to this type of buildings, when the military forces are protecting them. Finally, the art. 80 (a) of the Penal Code was modified creating a new crime: researching or gathering data of the armed forces without permission can mean up to six months of jail time and a 50.000 pounds fine.

Even if in a first approach it looks like the procedural situation of Patrick didn't change his situation, this should be analyzed more in detail, and with Patrick lawyers, if possible. When nonpermanent provisions that affect the rights of individuals are transformed in permanent provisions, an opportunity to claim the unconstitutionality of such laws could be open.

4. PATRICK ZAKI: CASE OVERVIEW

4.1. Patrick Zaki

Patrick George Zaki, a human rights activist and postgraduate student at Bologna University in Italy, is widely recognised as a prominent victim of the aforementioned laws. Zaki is currently enrolled in a postgraduate programme in Women and Gender Studies under the Erasmus Mundus initiative. Additionally, they are engaged in scholarly investigations pertaining to gender concerns and human rights as a member of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), a human rights organisation located in Cairo. Following his arrival at Cairo International Airport on February 7th, 2020, the individual in question was subjected to

⁶⁵ <https://cihrs.org/egypt-new-amendments-ratified-by-president-entrench-permanent-state-of-emergency/?lang=en>

detainment and pre-trial confinement for a duration of almost two years, until his eventual release on December 8th, 2021.

Zaki's case is commonly perceived as representative of the Egyptian government's curtailment of civil society and freedom of expression. The situation of Patrick Zaki has garnered global recognition regarding Egypt's performance in the realm of human rights. Zaki's immediate and unconditional release has been demanded by various human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. A resolution has been passed by the European Parliament, which calls for the release of Zaki and the adherence to human rights and the rule of law by the Egyptian government.

4.2. Legal Charges Against Zaki

The charges against Zaki include "disseminating false news," "inciting protests," "calling for the state to be overthrown", "inciting violence and terrorist crimes" and "using social media to undermine the social order and public safety". Human rights organizations and activists have pointed out that these charges are baseless and politically motivated.

The following presents the legal standing of the charges brought against Zaki.

4.2.1. Legal Standing

As per the account presented in Chapter 3, the Egyptian government restored the state of emergency in 2017 subsequent to the Palm Sunday church bombings. The current state of emergency has resulted in the curtailment of constitutional rights and non-governmental political activities such as street protests, unapproved political groups, unregistered financial contributions, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. Despite the official termination of the state of emergency, the conclusion has minimal bearing on the situation of Zaki. Due to being charged during the period of a state of emergency, his trial is currently undergoing proceedings within a military court.

The Egyptian government has implemented various legal amendments, as outlined in section 3.2, that have implications for the case of Zaki. The Cybercrime Law, officially titled the "Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes," which was enacted in 2018, confers upon the government the power to impede access to websites and social media accounts that are perceived to pose a risk to national security, public order, or public morals. The dissemination of false news or information that could potentially harm the public interest is criminalised by the law, and non-compliance with this provision can result in penalties such as fines and imprisonment. The Supreme Council for the Administration of the Media (SCMR) is led by a designated individual appointed by President Al-Sisi. According to the SCMR, false news is

characterised as content that is disseminated through unidentified sources and serves to propagate hate speech within a given society. The definition in question confers upon the government extensive and imprecise authorities to regulate online material, given that the classification of what constitutes false news seems to be subject to the judgement of the SCMR. In Egypt, the act of protesting without prior notification to the police is prohibited by Law No. 107 of 2013. In the event that the Interior Ministry deems that demonstrators are likely to violate the law, it retains the authority to nullify, delay, or relocate the protest.

The 2015 treason law in Egypt stipulates that individuals who engage in acts of terrorism, or provide support or funding to terrorist organisations, are subject to prosecution and may receive harsh punishments, such as life imprisonment or capital punishment. The legal definition of terrorism encompasses a wide range of activities that pose a threat to the well-being of a nation, violate established laws, or subvert the political order.

The Anti-Terrorism Law, also known as Law No. 94 of 2015, provides an extensive explanation of terrorism. It encompasses actions that are aimed at disrupting public order, endangering national unity, or jeopardising the well-being of society and its interests.

4.3. Similar cases

There have been several similar cases in Egypt where individuals have been detained and charged with crimes related to free expression and human rights activism. A few of these cases will be presented shortly in the following section.

4.3.1. Giulio Regeni

Giulio Regeni was an Italian Ph.D. candidate at the university of Cambridge who was conducting research on Egyptian independent labor unions when he disappeared on January 25th, 2016, in Cairo, Egypt (Walsh, 2017). His body was found on February 3rd, 2016, showing signs of torture, and his death was widely condemned as a human rights violation.

The circumstances surrounding Regeni's death remain unclear. The Egyptian government denied any involvement in his death. Later, Egyptian officials admitted Regeni was being monitored, but claimed that he was killed by a criminal gang. However, after the conduction of investigations by Italian authorities, the Italian parliamentary panel has accused the Egyptian security apparatus of kidnapping, torturing and murdering Regeni (AlJazeera, 2021).

A Rome trial in absentia has been delayed due to Egypt's refusal to release the addresses of the four senior Egyptian security officials being accused, so that prosecutors could inform them that they were being tried (The Guardian, 2023). To this day, no one has been held accountable for

Regeni's death. His case continues to be a symbol of the dangers faced by researchers, journalists, and activists who work on sensitive topics in authoritarian countries.

4.3.2. Ahmed Samir Santawy

Ahmed Samir Santawy is an Egyptian anthropology student who was studying in Italy and was scheduled to begin a Ph.D. program at the Central European University in Vienna, Austria. His research focuses on women's rights, including the history of reproductive rights in Egypt. He was detained by Egyptian authorities upon his arrival in Cairo in February 2021.

He was detained pending an investigation for allegedly spreading false news and joining a terrorist group. His detention has been widely condemned by human rights organizations, academics, and activists, and seems to be part of a pattern of arbitrary detention of Egyptian scholars and critics (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

He was on 4th July 2022, convicted of spreading "false news" and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. On July 29th, 2022, Santawy was given a presidential pardon and released from prison, however he is on a travel ban and unable to return to his studies in Vienna (Madasmr, 2022).

4.3.3. Waleed Salem

Waleed Salem is an Egyptian PhD candidate in political science at the University of Washington who was arrested in May 2018, after returning to Egypt for his field work. He was charged with "Membership in a banned terrorist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, while fully aware of its purposes, and spreading false news with the objective of undermining national interests and disturbing public peace.", amongst other charges (Shawkan, 2021).

Waleed Salem was provisionally released pending investigations in December 2018, after spending seven months in pre-trial detention, but he was put on a travel ban list, he is unable to travel outside Egypt, to continue his studies in the U.S, and to be reunited with his daughter who lives in Poland (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

5. PREVIOUS REACTIONS

The case of Patrick George Zaki has garnered significant criticism and condemnation from various entities, such as governments, intergovernmental organisations, international non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, and grassroots activists, due to perceived unfairness in the charges brought against him. The University of Bologna and the Italian government provided initial support in a demonstration of solidarity with Zaki. As of the present composition, there has been an increase in the backing received, which encompasses the Italian division of Amnesty International, the European Parliament, Scholars at Risk, and affiliated academic institutions such as the University of Oslo. This section of the report aims to provide a summary of the reactions of the institutions and organisations mentioned earlier, as well as to examine Norway's response to the Case.

5.1. Reactions in Italy

5.1.1. University of Bologna⁶⁶

Upon Zaki's detention, representatives of the University of Bologna including Rector Francesco Ubertini, the Board of Governors, the Department Directors, the Campus Presidents, the Administrative and Technical Staff Council, the Student Council, and the Academic Senate, urged the Italian government and the European Union to monitor his case closely to ensure that his fundamental rights are not violated. The University highlighted the individual right to freedom of thought and freedom of speech and appealed to the need of critical thinking at the academic level as a social responsibility to prompt action from the government and the EU. The University was able to gather support for this motion from 11 university associations and 35 universities. The University continues to stand in solidarity with Zaki; the university webpage continues to display a badge 'for Zaky' and the university students continue to gather in Bologna piazza.

5.1.2. Amnesty International

Amnesty International was quick to respond to Zaki's cause. On 10th February 2020, Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, called out the Egyptian authorities on the arbitrariness of his detention and torture and demanded his immediate and unconditional release.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See The University of Bologna, "Patrick George Zaki's Arrest: The Motion of the University of Bologna."

⁶⁷ Amnesty International, "Egypt: Arbitrary Arrest and Torture of Researcher Studying Gender in Italy."

“The authorities’ arbitrary arrest and torture of Patrick Zaki is yet another example of the state’s deep-rooted repression of perceived opponents and human rights’ defenders, which reaches more audacious levels with each passing day. We call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Patrick, who is detained solely for his human rights work and opinions he has expressed on social media. They must open an independent investigation into the torture he has suffered and urgently ensure his protection.”

On 13th February 2020, Amnesty International provided a model letter and called for urgent action to send letters of appeal for the immediate and unconditional release for Zaki and to open an independent investigation into the torture he had suffered.⁶⁸ On 27th October 2021, Amnesty International yet again called for urgent action. This time the appeal asked for dropping all charges brought against him in addition to the appeal for the immediate and unconditional release for Zaki and an independent investigation into the torture he had suffered.⁶⁹

5.1.3. Campaign for Patrick Zaki⁷⁰

Amnesty International Italia and Conversazioni sul Futuro of the association Diffondiamo idee di Valore collaborated with the Festival of Human Rights of Milan and the association Articolo 21 to promote a campaign ‘Free Patrick Zaki, prisoner of conscience’ by organizing an international poster competition called ‘Poster for Tomorrow’. Scholars at Risk Italia had also joined this campaign. The campaign and the competition garnered international attention; the jury received 900 posters from across 50 countries. These posters have been displayed across the world, particularly in universities and cities across Italy.

5.1.4. Government of Italy

Two Italian lawmakers gathered some 270,000 signatures on an online petition for Zaki to be granted Italian citizenship.⁷¹ In April 2021, out of the 240 senate members, 208 voted in favour of the decision.⁷² The senate further called for the standing government to “conduct necessary consultations” that would grant Patrick Zaki citizenship and allow for Italy to demand his release. By then, over 50 Italian cities had granted Zaki “honorary citizenship”.⁷³ On this second birthday in prison, Stefano Bonaccini, the governor of the Democratic Party, called on the

⁶⁸ Amnesty International, “Egypt: Human Rights Defender Detained and Tortured: Patrick Zaki George.”

⁶⁹ Amnesty International, “Egypt: Further Information: Tortured Defender Tried by Special Court: Patrick George Zaki.”

⁷⁰ Scholars at Risk, “SAR Italy Joins Poster for Tomorrow Campaign for Patrick Zaki.”

⁷² Wanted in Africa, “Senate Votes to Give Patrick Zaki Italian Citizenship.”

⁷³ Areeb Ullah, “Egypt: Activist Patrick Zaki Released Following International Pressure.”

government to confer to the unanimous vote of the parliament and grant him citizenship.⁷⁴ The Italian government continued to call for Zaki's release and all charges against him to be dropped. After Zaki's release from detention on 8th December 2021, Foreign Minister of Italy, Luigi Di Maio released a Twitter post, "First Goal achieved. Patrick Zaki is no longer in prison."⁷⁵ This indicated Italy's continued interest in the Case.

5.2. Reaction of the European Parliament

From 11-13th April 2022, EU Special Representative for Human Rights Mission, Eamon Gilmore visited Egypt and engaged with the Egyptian Foreign Minister and relevant representatives of governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to discuss the existing human rights situation in the State at the time. Gilmore welcomed the publication of Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy 2021-2026 and discussed its effective implementation. In addition, he discussed the issue of treatment of prisoners and detainees and how it was important to preserve their dignity raising individual cases.⁷⁶ The European Parliament took a clear stand on the human rights situation in Egypt through its resolution dated 21st November 2022.⁷⁷

5.3. Scholars at Risk

Alongside Amnesty International, Scholars at Risk (SAR) has also been at the forefront of the advocacy campaign for Patrick Zaki. On 19th March 2020, the Italian chapter of SAR issued a letter urging the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to "*intervene and ensure the unconditional release*" of Zaki.⁷⁸ On 8th October 2021, the Executive Director of SAR, Robert Quinn, sent another letter to the President urging him to drop charges against Zaki and immediately release him.⁷⁹ On 27th January 2022, Quinn sent another letter to the President, this time urging him to release Zaki to enable him to complete his higher education at the University of Bologna.⁸⁰ Simultaneously, SAR initiated a campaign imploring for emails, letters and faxes to be sent to the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against Zaki.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Middle East Monitor, "Fresh Calls to Give Patrick Zaki Italian Citizenship as He 'celebrates' 30th Birthday in Egypt Prison."

⁷⁵ Aljazeera, "Egyptian Court Releases Researcher Patrick Zaki."

⁷⁶ Press Information Team, "EU Special Representative for Human Rights Mission to Egypt 11-13 April 2022."

⁷⁷ European Parliament, "European Parliament Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Egypt."

⁷⁸ Scholars at Risk, "SAR Italy Calls for the Release of Patrick George Zaki."

⁷⁹ Scholars at Risk, "Drop Charges and Immediately Release Patrick George Zaki."

⁸⁰ Scholars at Risk, "Release Patrick George Zaki to Enable Him to Complete His Master's Program."

⁸¹ Scholars at Risk, "Patrick George Zaki, Egypt (Campaign)."

5.3.1. Student-led Advocacy Campaign

In addition, SAR has a project that monitors Academic Freedom.⁸² The project aims to report on attacks on higher education to raise awareness, generate advocacy to increase protection of scholars, students and academic communities. SAR utilises student-led advocacy (SLA) campaigns for extended impact. The University of Columbia, Santa Barbara, the University of British Columbia (UBC), Roger Williams University and University of Oslo (UiO) are currently administering the SLA campaigns for Zaki. Previously, the University of Padova (UPD), UBC and UiO had engaged in the advocacy campaign for Zaki. The UPD organised the LIBERTAS Conference that brought together students and scholars to debate academic freedom to shed light on the Zaki case.⁸³ In the event of the one-year anniversary of Zaki’s continued detention, the UBC students called on the “*immediate and unconditional release of Patrick Zaki, the dismissal of all charged and investigation on the circumstances of his arrest, enforced disappearance and torture*”.⁸⁴ They also posted digital awareness posters on Facebook.

5.3.2. SAR Student-led UiO Advocacy Campaign⁸⁵

SAR student-led UiO advocacy campaign focused on increasing awareness of the case among key officials to bring the case within their core agenda. At the time of the previous campaign, Zaki was under detention for a year and the campaign was designed to demonstrate that there still remained public interest in Zaki’s case. The team had students from different countries and each of the members undertook the responsibility to raise awareness on the case in their home countries. As part of the campaign, a short informative video on Zaki’s case was produced which was then disseminated via email primarily to embassies in Cairo urging them to call for Zaki’s release from detention.

5.4. Reaction from the Norwegian government

As a response to the student-led email urging the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Cairo to call for Zaki’s release, both the Ministry and the Embassy responded that they were following the human rights situation in Egypt as part of their foreign policy efforts to ensure the protection of human rights. They ensured that Zaki’s case was under their radar as the case was among the priority cases in the EU. In addition, the

⁸² Scholars at Risk, “Academic Freedom Monitoring Project.”

⁸³ sar_unipd, “Libertas: Spcaes and Pactices of Academic Freedom 24 June 2022.”

⁸⁴ “UCB Students for Scholars at Risk.”

⁸⁵ Collected from previous campaign report.

Ministry confirmed that their efforts of supporting human rights defenders were primarily channelled through the United Nations. This information is true. On 13th November 2019, Norway's recommendations at the 34th UPR session of the Human Rights Council regarding the human rights situation in Egypt called for guaranteeing "*freedom of expression ... in all its forms, including artistic expressions, online and offline*" and ensuring "*the protection of all citizens against torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment*".⁸⁶ Then, on 12th March 2021, at the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Norway, in a joint statement on Egypt, expressed deep concern on the human rights situation on Egypt, drawing particular attention to the "*restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, the constrained space for civil society and political opposition, and the application of terrorism legislation against peaceful critics*".⁸⁷ However, it must be noted that the Norwegian government seemingly refrain from addressing the Egyptian government on its human rights violations directly.

⁸⁶ Norway's Permanent Missions to the UN and WTO/EFTA, "Recommendations to Egypt."

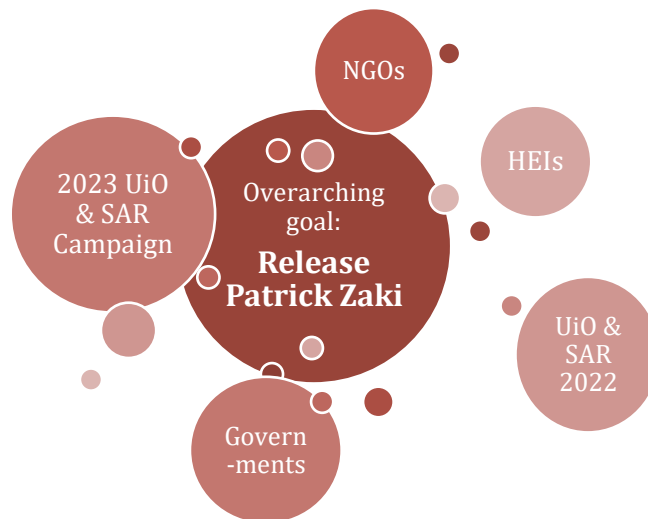
⁸⁷ H.E. Ambassador Kirsti Kauppi, "HRC 46th Session - Item 4 - GD Human Rights Situations That Require the Council's Attention. Joint Statement on Egypt."

6. 2023 ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN: GOAL, OBJECTIVE AND TACTICS

This chapter outlines the primary goal and objectives of the advocacy campaign. Here, we distinguish between the overarching objective of previous and on-going campaigns aiming for the release of Patrick Zaki, and the specific and short-term objectives of our group project. The project objectives were adapted to a realistic level of ambition, reflecting the strict timeframe and limited resources given.

6.1. Goal and objective

As described in Chapter 5.1, numerous organisations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, Amnesty International, Scholars at Risk, and a significant number of colleges, have invested heavily in the Zaki case in the past. The 2023 UiO and Scholars at Risk Advocacy campaign is one of several initiatives with the common goal of securing Patrick Zaki's release.



Examples of previous and existing campaigns working towards the same goal; the release of Patrick Zaki

Acknowledging that our campaign is limited in resources and implemented with a short time frame, we wished to formulate a project objective that reflected our role as a steppingstone to the release of Zaki.

Moreover, we wanted that our campaign would shed light on the Zaki case in a broader context, emphasising that the fight for Zaki's freedom is part of a larger struggle for putting an end to the human rights crackdown in Egypt. By relating Zaki's case to other similar cases, we wished to demonstrate a pattern of deteriorating human rights for scholars, activists, and other human rights defenders in the country.

Lastly, we wanted our campaign to target the Norwegian government. When researching for the project, we realized that previous statements by the Norwegian government on the Human Rights situation in Egypt are somewhat vague compared to statements from other states.⁸⁸ We wondered about the reason for this – could it be financial incentives? Or perhaps a more careful and dialogue-based approach vis-à-vis Egypt rather than public “naming and shaming”? Regardless of the justification, we found it worrying that the human rights situation in Egypt rarely is mentioned by the government, and therefore we wished to raise greater awareness on the matter here in Norway.

Based on the reflections above, we formulated the following objective:

The objective of the 2023 advocacy campaign is to increase the awareness of the case of Patrick Zaki and similar cases of persecution of academics and human rights defenders in Egypt, primarily targeting the Norwegian actors.

Once the campaign objectives were formulated, we decided on four main tactics that would guide the project activities moving forward:

6.1.1. Tactic 1: Building on existing momentum – creating an international network

As mentioned in Chapter 6.1, we wanted the campaign to add additional value to the broad range of previous and existing efforts towards the release of Zaki. We therefore decided to get in contact with other SAR groups working on the Zaki case. We believed creating a network of activists would strengthen our ability to put pressure on Norwegian actors, demonstrating that our case has strong backing from similar campaigns across the globe. In addition, in order to enhance credibility towards the Norwegian government and other Norwegian actors, we decided that we our communication would include referrals to statements influential international actors, such as the recent EU Parliament Resolution condemning the human rights violations in Egypt.

⁸⁸ See for instance the November 2023 EU Parliament Resolution: [Texts adopted - Human rights situation in Egypt - Thursday, 24 November 2022 \(europa.eu\)](#)

6.1.2. Tactic 2: Using the Transparency Act to obtain information from Norwegian companies in Egypt

Suspicious that trade or investment relations might be a reason for the lack of clear statements by the Norwegian Government on the human rights situation in Egypt, we were inspired to look more in detail into the Norwegian companies operating in the country. The Norwegian Pension fund has increased their investments in Egypt as a result of their improved investment climate between the two countries, and in late 2020 the pension fund held shares in 33 companies with a total worth of over 550 million dollars. There has also been increased efforts in increasing investments between the two countries, especially in the area of green energy transition⁸⁹.

The question was how to enter into any constructive dialogue about these companies' whereabouts, their concerns for human rights in Egypt, and their ability to influence the Norwegian government towards increasing the pressure on Egyptian authorities.

Here, we believed The Norwegian Transparency Act would provide a useful tool to extract relevant information from these companies. Ever since the law came into effect in July 2022, companies are required to share information on any human rights impact of their commercial activities. By referring to this law, we knew the companies were legally obliged to get back to us. We decided to contact the following companies: Scatec Solar, Empower, Jotun and Skretting. The emails and their replies are included in Appendix A.

6.1.3. Tactic 3: Meetings with government representatives and human rights organizations in Norway

In order to influence the Norwegian government, we believed it would be most effective to meet with representatives from Norway in person. Aware that this was a challenging tactic within the limited scope of our campaign, we still wanted to give this tactic a try. A part of this would include meetings with other influential actors in Norway who potentially could refer us to MFA officials or other state representatives.

6.1.4. Tactic 4: Distribution of digital pamphlet

In order to make the campaign visible, and to make our objective clear to the actors we reached out to, we decided to create a simple digital pamphlet that would be distributed online. We would partner with other SAR groups who were willing to post our content in their respective social media channels.

⁸⁹ Samir (2022)

Tactic	Explanation
1) Build on existing momentum – create an international network of activists	Partner with other SAR groups working on the same case. Referring to statements from credible actors such as the EU, the UN Special Rapporteur.
2) Use the Transparency Act to obtain information about Norwegian companies’ activities in Egypt	Require information on human rights due diligence procedures from Norwegian companies operating in Egypt.
3) Meetings with government representatives and human rights organisations in Norway	When meeting with Norwegian actors (MFA, political organisations etc.), prioritise physical meetings over emails to enhance dialogue.
4) Distribution of digital pamphlet	Ensure visibility by creating and distributing a digital pamphlet.

Table 1: List of tactics for the 2023 campaign

7. ACHIEVEMENTS

7.1. Tactic 1: Building on existing momentum - create an international network of activists

Throughout the campaign period, we have been in contact with the representatives on from Scholars at Risk. This resulted in several meetings regarding the case, which allowed us to coordinate our efforts and to share experiences. We were in contact with representatives from the university of Bologna, UC Santa Barbara, University of British Columbia and Roger Williams University. In addition, we reached out to several accounts on Instagram working with the case.

This cooperation opened the possibility for us to join a zoom-meeting with the universities mentioned above, and Patrick Zaki himself. In this meeting we got valuable information and insights into the efforts that are being made in the case, as well as a chance to express our solidarity to Zaki. During the meeting we got the chance to ask Zaki about how the change in state of emergency will influence his case. Unfortunately, he was also of the opinion that this does not change his case substantially, due to the fact that he was charged when the state of emergency was still in force. Nevertheless, this discussion made some of the other participants interested about learning more about how the legal background of the case. Therefore, it was organized a digital meeting where our group shared our knowledge on the legal background to students from UCBS and UBC as a part of their preparation for traveling to Washington DC to conduct advocacy on behalf of Zaki.

We believe that this cooperation has helped us, and other activist streamline our efforts, and contribute to a stronger and more aligned network of activist working on Zakis. case.

7.2. Tactic 2: Use the Transparency Act to obtain information about Norwegian companies' activities in Egypt

To obtain information about Norwegian trade- and investment-interests in Egypt, and how these companies position themselves in regard to human rights violations, we submitted four transparency act requests to four Norwegian companies we know have operations in Egypt (see appendix A). This is connected to our objective of creating awareness amongst different Norwegian actors operating in Egypt, and to attain information about the ethical considerations taken into consideration when operating in the country. The feedback we got from the companies were variable, and even though they are obliged by the transparency act to reply within 3 weeks, we did not receive replies from all of the companies. Our concerns in the e-mail were focused on the political climate in Egypt and their thoughts around freedom of thought and

expression. From the responses received, we can see that there is varying awareness amongst companies on the political climate they are operating in.

The Norwegian company Jotun is a big supplier of paint and coating products and have been present in Egypt since the mid 1980s⁹⁰. In their response to our transparency act request (appendix A), they gave us a thorough overview of their codes of conduct, policies and their assessment and reporting procedures, and put emphasis on the importance of transparency and measures taken to protect civil society and the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Skretting, a global provider of aquaculture feed and services, has helped make Egypt's aquaculture industry the largest in Africa. On their website, they provide an overview of their CSR/ESG activities, highlighting their efforts to contribute to local communities and ensure sustainability in their supply chain and production. However, they did not respond to our request under the Transparency Act, so we have little insight into their operations in Egypt.

Scatec Solar is a Norwegian company and is the largest investor in the bonbon solar park in Aswan, Egypt. In addition, they have made several moves to start more large-scale investment within the green technology sector in Egypt⁹¹. They do have a good overview over ESG and human rights resources on their webpage, outlining community impact and labor conditions as their main human rights concerns, but they are not elaborate further on this in the public report⁹². They have not responded to our transparency act request.

Also operating in the area of the green transition is the company Empower. They offer services to help with a green transition, and they are working with amongst others Egyptian producers and industries to help them transition to a more sustainable production⁹³. In their response to our transparency act request, they do underline that they have internal processes and codes of conduct, but they put emphasis on the fact that since they mostly provide services and is not necessarily interact with the local communities.

⁹⁰ Egypt Oil and Gas (2019)

⁹¹ Samir (2022)

⁹² <https://scatec.com/sustainability/esg-resources/>

⁹³ El-Din (2022)

7.3. Tactic 3: Contact with government representatives and organizations in Norway

7.3.1. Meeting with LO

During our campaign, we had a meeting with a representative from LO who is primarily working with the MENA region. LO is Norway's largest organization for employees and the main organization for all trade unions in Norway. With almost a million members as of 2022 they have a high standing in Norwegian society and thus the power to influence politics. Our meeting was with the International Department of LO, who previously has issued statements condemning the human rights situation for workers in Egypt.⁹⁴ Their main focus is on labor rights and the monitoring and reporting on the political and socio-economic situation in the project countries, but in addition they do have concerns within related areas such as human rights and women's rights⁹⁵. In the meeting with LO, we got a great chance to discuss the case and the current situation in Egypt with an expert in the field. He had several suggestions on how to go about with advocacy cases like these, and also gave us some good contact points.

After the meeting, we prepared a more detailed presentation on Zaki's case, where we to a larger degree connected the case to LO's work abroad. The main objective was to connect academic freedom to labor rights, to show LO how this case could fall within the scope of their mandate. Our contact there was committed to discuss the case on their next weekly meeting. We see this meeting as a part of our efforts in activating other actors that can have some influence.

7.3.2. Workshop with SAIH Bislet

SAIH (*Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpesfond*) is a Norwegian organization that is working internationally towards everyone having access to adequate education and academic freedom. They are working with 30 organizations in 7 countries in Latin-America, Southern Africa, and Asia. Even though Egypt is not one of these, SAIH still works politically to promote education and academic freedom in the whole world⁹⁶.

We got in contact with the Bislet local chapters in Oslo, and together with them we planned and held a workshop on Patrick Zaki's case. During the workshop we presented Zaki's case and gave the students participating, information about the political climate in Egypt surrounding academic freedom and freedom of speech. The local chapter was especially interested in hearing about student advocacy since one of the main political goals of SAIH 2023 ongoing political

⁹⁴ LO (2022): [Egypt er et av verdens verste land for arbeidere | Landsorganisasjonen i Norge \(lo.no\)](#)

⁹⁵ LO (2023)

⁹⁶ SAIH (2023)

campaign is to implement Student Advocacy Seminars in more study programs. We discussed transnational advocacy efforts in Zaki's case to showcase the importance of international pressure in the fight for scholars' rights.

The workshop is part of our efforts to raise awareness of Zaki's case and encourage SAIH's activists to take action in supporting the ongoing international advocacy work being done on behalf of Patrick.

7.3.3. Dialogue with the Norwegian Embassy in Cairo

As a part of our efforts in trying to activate different actors, we reached out to the Norwegian Embassy in Cairo. We organized a digital meeting with the second secretary (political), who was the person working closest with the political and human rights situation in Egypt. The meeting was very fruitful, as we got to discuss the current human rights situation in Egypt, in addition to getting valuable insights in how the Norwegian Embassy works with cases like Zakis.

7.4. Tactic 4: Distribution of digital pamphlet

Through the cooperation with other groups working on various SAR-projects at the University of Oslo, we used the Master students of Human Rights at the University of Oslo as a platform to publish our digital pamphlet (See figure X at 7.4.1 at page 31.).

In addition, we used our connections that we have made in the SAR-network to reach out to other universities and shared the digital pamphlet with them to share on their respective social media platforms. We also shared the digital pamphlet with SAIH Bislet, so that they could share it on their social media.

7.4.1. Figure X: Digital pamphlet

**For Academic Freedom
We stand with
ZAKI**

**Zaki is an Advocate
for Gender Issues
and Human Rights**

**For Academic Freedom
We stand with
ZAKI
Do you?**

Zaki is charged with

- disseminating false news**
- disturbing social order and public safety**
- undermining State authority by inciting protest**
- inciting violence and terrorist crimes**

17-20 hours of interrogation (including alleged electricution and torture)

22 months of detention, awaiting trial since 2020

currently under travel ban restricting his higher education abroad

SPREAD THE WORD. PLEASE SHARE.

7.5. Other Achievements

7.5.1. Information-seeking

As a way for our group to gain more insight into Zaki's case, we found it valuable to seek more information about the political climate and human rights situation in Egypt. To complement our desktop research, we contacted a professor at UiO specializing in Egypt and the middle east. In addition to providing us with insightful knowledge of Egyptian politics and history, he also provided us with excellent access to other actors. The primary objective of this endeavour was to enhance our own understanding, but we also perceive it as a means of disseminating information about Zaki's situation to various Norwegian entities operating in Egypt.

7.5.2. Spreading the word

Our group has taken advantage of the possibilities that have materialized to spread information and awareness on Patrick Zaki's case. One of these opportunities was when one member of the group had the chance to be interviewed on Argentinean television and used this opportunity to talk about the case.

8. REFLECTIONS

Working on this case has been a challenging, yet meaningful experience that has given us valuable insight to how advocacy works in practice.

Building on SAR's suggested goal for the project – *engaging European actors in Zaki's case and other similar cases* – we approached the project with an objective of “*increase[ing] the awareness of the case of Patrick Zaki and similar cases of persecution of academics and human rights defenders in Egypt, primarily targeting the Norwegian actors*”. In order to reach that objective, we decided to build on the extensive previous and existing advocacy efforts for Zaki happening globally, and to enter into constructive dialogue with both public and private actors in order to raise awareness about the case.

The most challenging component of the project was striking a balance between the desire to have the greatest potential impact and the practical requirements for running the project, ending our efforts, and producing the report. This was the most difficult aspect of the project. As many of us became more absorbed in the investigation, our sense of personal devotion to it developed to the point that it became challenging for us to give up on the quest. The decision to give up on the initiative was not an easy one to make, despite the fact that we were aware from the very beginning that our actions were only a minor component of a much broader campaign.

As a consequence of this, it turned out to be a good idea to strengthen the network of activists in Norway and other countries that shared similar ideals and were working towards Zaki's complete independence. Even though our campaign was only active for a short period of time (a few months), it was heartening to learn that we were successful in motivating other players to continue the advocacy and, as a result, keep the project alive.

To be more specific, the co-hosting of a workshop with SAIH provided an opportune opportunity to hand off the initiative to another student activist group. Regarding Zaki's case and other cases like it in the future, we are hopeful that SAIH will be able to bring these conversations to a successful conclusion. In addition, we were successful in bolstering the connection between UiO, SAR, and SAR's partner universities; this is something that we believe may be carried over to subsequent campaigns.

In addition to the participation of other activists, we feel that we were successful in bringing Zaki's situation to the notice of a large number of significant parties in Norway, including businesses from the private sector, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Law Office. It was never our intention to coerce these players into immediately changing their behaviour; rather, our objective was to get them to reflect on the part they played in Zaki's case as well as the broader human rights situation in Egypt. Although these initiatives are small, they may make an impact in the long term, particularly if the awareness-raising activities are perpetuated by actors in our network or the subsequent UiO group. We consider this as a contribution to the wider efforts that SAR is doing on the case.

It is strongly recommended that students of the future keep expanding the group of people who are working on the case for potential future initiatives in order to continue increasing the group's power to have a significant impact as a whole. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at any moment; we would be happy to assist you in the launch of your campaign as well as connect you with essential actors.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Emails and replies

Appendix A.1 Transparency act request

To whom it may concern at xxx,

Hi! I am a researcher at the Norwegian Center for Human Rights and I am currently working on a project concerning the human rights situation in Egypt, especially in the area of civil society and freedom of expression.

In connection with this I am very interested in different Norwegian firms' due diligence processes for their operations in Egypt, and how they relate to the current human rights violations and challenges. I therefore want to make a transparency act request regarding xxx's due diligence procedure in Egypt.

Do xxx have any concerns about operations in Egypt, especially in regards to the violations regarding restriction of civil society and freedom of expression?

A particular area of concern is the political climate that is making it hard for civil society actors to voice up about concerns that are against the views of the Egyptian regime. The attraction of foreign capital and investors are important for Egypt, and criticism against foreign operations can be seen as damaging for the regime. I was therefore wondering what concrete measures you have implemented to ensure that civil society are able to express concerns regarding your operations? Do you have any concerns about the human rights protection in Egypt overall when starting new projects and operations, or do you have any thoughts on how to navigate an ethical business practice in a country that does not have sufficient human rights protection?

I am looking forward to hearing back from you!

Best regards

Appendix A.2 Transparency act replies

Jotun

Hi Live Samuelsen Robberstad,

With regards to your request dated 7th of March 2023, please find the below information about Jotun as a global company and our business in Egypt:

Jotun has a set of global policies and procedures that apply to all our companies including Jotun's operations in Egypt. Here you will find an overview of procedures, policies and activities that are relevant to your questions about human rights.

Jotun is a global company with 67 companies and 40 factories on all continents, and is represented in more than 100 countries. As a responsible corporate citizen, Jotun places ethical business conduct at the center of its operations, allowing the company to model good corporate behaviour for both employees and the society at large. Jotun's approach to human rights is grounded in our [values](#), Loyalty, Care, Respect and Boldness and we conduct business in the interest of customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, the environment and society. Jotun values are reinforced by a solid and governance framework articulated in Jotun [Business Principles](#) and policies which are consistent with Jotun's commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We adhere to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) to contribute to the goal of creating a sustainable and inclusive global economy. Jotun's corporate [Human Rights policy](#) applies to all companies and is aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Human Rights and the International Labor Organisation (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This policy safeguards uniform operations and control functions in all our local companies.

Key human rights elements are embedded in global policies, processes and reporting tools, as well as being addressed explicitly in audits and reviews. Jotun performs risk-based due diligence of our operations and suppliers. This enables us to assess, prevent and address actual or potential adverse impacts on human rights and decent working conditions that Jotun may cause, contribute, or be linked to. Each local company is committed to having processes in place to take appropriate remediation actions in case it identifies that it has caused or contributed to adverse impact of human rights.

Human rights assessments in all Jotun companies are done through:

- Business Reviews: Twice a year, focus on Human Rights possible risk areas.
- Assessment: Once a year, focus on status within the elements in the human rights policy.
- Compliance audit: Every third year, following up human rights aspects.

Ensuring the health and safety of workers at Jotun's network of factories, plays a critical role in the company's Social Sustainability program. By taking a comprehensive approach to HSEQ that includes risk awareness, optimizing processes, competence training and measuring performance over multiple categories, Jotun not only supports the development of a strong safety culture, but secure compliance with local laws and global regulations related to working conditions, fire safety and environmental performance. National regulations and laws represent each company's minimum requirements, and the Jotun HSEQ Management System outlines the supplementary requirements to assure continuous improvement in accordance with relevant ISO-standards. Comprehensive audits and inspections routines are in place to verify HSEQ performance in both the workplace and for our contractors and suppliers.

Jotun strives to make meaningful impact on society based on mutual understanding and respect. Globally, Jotun works in collaboration with international partners, such as Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement, UNICEF and Norwegian People's Aid. Locally, all Jotun companies are required to engage in corporate responsibility initiatives every year. These efforts, combined with how Jotun manages its own business and models good corporate behaviour, form the basis for the company's ambitions to make a positive impact on society.

Our local company in Egypt was established in 1986. Today, we have 392 employees with one production facility. In our corporate Human Rights policy, Jotun recognise and respect the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. When operating in countries where this right is limited by law, such as Egypt, we seek to take mitigating actions in line with local conditions and regulations. Regular meetings between the employees and the local management are conducted for the employees to voice their opinions. In all local companies, regular anonymous employee engagement surveys are conducted with structured follow up and feedback to all employees. Relevant measures are implemented based on survey results.

With reference to the assessments mentioned above, the business reviews, yearly human rights assessments and compliance audits in Jotun Egypt have not uncovered any serious breaches on

human rights the past years. With regards to the civil society, we always meet with openness and transparency. Jotun's dedicated whistle blowing channel is open to both internal and external stakeholders who may wish to report on suspected violations of Jotun's Business Principles, laws or regulations. Concerns can be reported anonymously through this channel and are handled confidentially.

We hope that this gives you a better understanding of how we operate in line with human rights on a general basis and specifically in Egypt. If you have any further questions feel free to contact us again.

Best regards

A [REDACTED]

S [REDACTED] Manager

Group Strategy & Sustainability

Empower

Hi Live,

Thanks for connecting.

Sorry for the late reply, yes, for sure, we do have our approach and way of doing this, although in almost 50 countries at the moment and not operating in any country except for providing software as a service in most cases. We do have strategic partnerships etc though, so some views on how to push for sustainability and not least incentivising transparency from our end of it.

I guess we do have some knowledge of Egypt specifically as well and do have a good network to try to push things and initiatives forward. Primarily related to transparency in waste collection, which is a challenge I believe as most is from a mostly informal sector before it reaches the major sorting centers.

We have some internal processes/codes of conduct etc, and due diligence of partners and their policies etc, but little of larger politics tools or capabilities.

Best regards,

W [REDACTED]

Scatec

No reply.

Skretting

No reply.