



## [The U.S. State Department Calls for an Investigation into the Detention and Death of Egyptian Researcher Ayman Hadhoud](#)

The U.S. State Department has expressed that the detainment and death of Egyptian researcher Ayman Hadhoud requires an immediate “thorough, transparent, and credible” investigation. This comes after rights groups previously voiced major concerns regarding the troubling circumstances surrounding the case, with valid evidence that Hadhoud had been forcibly disappeared and tortured based on public records, interviews, and the examination of leaked photos of his corpse. The El-Sisi government’s statements attributing his death to natural causes have been justifiably called into question as implausible and contradictory, and Hadhoud’s case has again drawn attention to their arbitrary detainment and torture of Egyptian journalists, academics, political opponents, critics, and others. Activists have detailed the systematic and widespread crackdown on freedoms in Egypt under El-Sisi, which has seen tens of thousands imprisoned without due process and subjected to disturbing levels of physical abuse and torture.

Hadhoud was a critic of government policies and military rule under El-Sisi, and is believed to have been forcibly detained back in early February of this year. While Egyptian authorities claim that he died of natural causes, leaked photos of his corpse instead suggest that he was brutally tortured – thus prompting the calls for a comprehensive investigation by rights groups and now, the U.S. State Department as well. In his remarks earlier this week, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that the United States was “deeply disturbed” by the reports and allegations of abuse leading to Hadhoud’s death. In fact, Hadhoud’s family has expressed that they suspected he had been killed and feared that a cover-up was being planned upon learning of his whereabouts. Rights groups have also pointed to the suspicious holding of Hadhoud’s body in the hospital morgue for more than a month as further signs of foul play, with it indicating that this was done in order for his corpse to decompose to an extent that would obscure the true circumstances behind his death.

El-Sisi authorities have fueled additional doubt regarding the case due to their conflicting accounts about Hadhoud’s detainment. The Ministry of the Interior stated that officials sent him to a hospital back in February after he supposedly tried to break into an apartment in the Zamalek district in central Cairo. On the other hand, his hospital records reportedly show that he was admitted after allegedly trying to steal a car in an area outside of the capital city of Cairo. There was also no explanation offered for why Hadhoud would have been where authorities claimed that he was, which is over 100 kilometers from where he lived.

Rights activists are not surprised with the questionable and contradictory nature of the claims surrounding Hadhoud’s death. Arbitrary arrests, forcible disappearances, and state-sponsored use of torture have all been consistent characteristics under the El-Sisi government. Currently, there are believed to be at least 60,000 political prisoners in Egypt that have been imprisoned for bogus and trumped-up charges. Additionally, prison conditions are poor and credible accounts of security forces’ use of torture are not uncommon. As an unfortunate result of this, many detainees have died while in custody during El-Sisi’s reign, and it is feared that the death of Ayman Hadhoud is also linked with the physical abuse and mistreatment of prisoners as well.