Subject: Petition in support of Mr. Patrick George Zaki

To: His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi  
President, Arab Republic of Egypt  
Office of the President  
Al Itihadia Palace  
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt  
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Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

Date: 19th March 2020

Your Excellency,

We write on behalf of our university communities in Italy 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 and a Human Rights defender.

We respectfully urge you to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Zaki, allowing him to go back to resume his studies at the University of Bologna, and to permit the appropriate authorities to investigate his alleged torture.

Patrick George 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.
We understand from Scholars at Risk (SAR), an international network of individuals and institutions committed to protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom – of which our universities are members – that Mr Zaki returned to Egypt for a brief family visit in Mansoura and that, upon his arrival at Cairo International Airport, he was stopped by the Egyptian National Security Agency (NSA). He subsequently disappeared for 24 hours. It has been reported that officers arrested and interrogated him for several hours without the presence of his lawyers in an unknown location.

During these 24 hours he was reportedly subjected to physical abuse and torture, including by electric shocks. The next day, the Public Prosecutor of Mansoura ordered his detention on remand for 15 days, detention that was confirmed on February 22 for another 15 days. According to Front Line Defenders, Mr Zaki was accused of ‘spreading false news,’ ‘incitement to protest without authorisation,’ ‘incitement to violence and terrorism,’ and ‘calling for the overthrow of the state.’

We further understand from SAR that Egyptian authorities presented a document stating that he has been detained because of an arrest warrant issued in September 2019, but they have not publicly disclosed the evidentiary basis for this decision so far.

In the absence of any information that may clarify our understanding of these events, the facts as described above suggest that Mr Zaki is detained in apparent retaliation for his nonviolent exercise of the right to freedom of expression, protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 19) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Egypt has ratified in 1982.

We are gravely concerned by Mr Zaki’s detention conditions. We learn from Front Line Defenders that Egyptian authorities limited his contact with his family and with his legal counsel, conditions that may affect the right of due process and a fair trial, according to the Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We therefore respectfully urge you to intervene and ensure the unconditional release of Patrick George Zaki, to allow his return to Italy to continue his studies and to open an investigation on his alleged torture.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
President European University Institute  
Prof. Renaud Dehousse

University of Padova  
Prof. Rosario Rizzuto

Director Scuola Normale Superiore  
Prof. Luigi Ambrosio

University of Pavia  
Prof. Francesco Svelto

SISSA  
Director Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati (SISSA)  
Prof. Stefano Ruffo

University of Siena  
Prof. Francesco Frati

University of Cagliari  
Prof. Maria Del Zompo

University of Trento  
Prof. Paolo Collini

University of Firenze  
Prof. Luigi Dei

University of Trieste  
Prof. Roberto Di Lenarda

University of Genova  
Prof. Comanducci Paolo

University of Udine  
Prof. Roberto Pinton
CC:

The Honorable Michelle Bachelet  
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The Honorable Stefania Pucciarelli
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Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

European University Institute

Renaud Dehousse

[Signature]
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Scuola Normale Superiore

The Rector Luigi Ambrosio

[Signature]
Trieste, march 19 2020

Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt – SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Yours sincerely,

Stefano Ruffo

Full Professor of Condensed Matter Physics and Director, SISSA
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

University of Cagliari/Università degli Studi di Cagliari

Maria Del Zompo, Rector Legal Representative

Signature
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Università degli Studi di Firenze

Prof. Luigi Dei
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Name of the University: Università degli Studi di Genova

Full name of the Rector: Prof. Paolo Comanducci

Signature
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Università degli Studi di Padova

Rettore
Rosario Rizzuto
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Università degli Studi di Pavia

Prof. Francesco Svelto, the Rector
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

University of Siena

The Rector Francesco Frati
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

University of Trento

The Rector Paolo Collini
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

University of Trieste

Rector prof. Roberto di Lenarda

Signature
Subject: Petition to the President, Arab Republic of Egypt - SAR Italy for Patrick George Zaki

Name of the University/Institution: University of Udine

Full name of the Rector/President: Prof. Roberto Pinton

Signature: [Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]