



June 24th 2020

To Dr Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director General of the World Health Organization

To Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab
Deputy Director General of the World Health Organization

To Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari
WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

RE: COVID-19 - Send an independent WHO/UN Committee to Egyptian prisons

Following the publication of an alarming study by an [Egyptian polling institute](#) which estimates that more than 600,000 Egyptians have contracted the COVID-19 – a much higher figure than what the regime had released so far and the article in [the Guardian](#) warning about the threat of the fast transmission of the COVID-19 in prisons, we, members of rights group BATEL, are writing to you again to request that an **independent committee made of WHO and UN staff visits Egyptian prisons along with all detention centres to assess the situation in terms of infection rates, medical care and protection measures.**

Through our work, as a leading rights group, to tally the real numbers of infection and deaths of the pandemic, we have had access to worrying testimonies showing that the COVID-19 situation is already dramatic in some prisons.

Thus, **according to our information, more than 300 detainees have shown symptoms of the COVID-19 in Scorpion prison where most political prisoners are detained.** It seems that no preventive measures have been taken and most severe cases have been ignored so far by the prison authorities.

As already described in our previous letters and in NGO reports, the conditions of detention are appalling and greatly favouring a fast spread of the disease. The fact that they do not receive any treatment indicates that **the regime simply aims at letting prisoners die, abandoned by the international community.**

→ We want to repeat that these prisoners are prisoners of conscience. They have not committed any other crime than thinking freely.

BATEL organization officially asks you to request an independent assessment of the COVID-19 situation in Egyptian prisons to avoid a disaster. **There are more than 60,000 political prisoners in Egypt. It seems evident to us that it falls within the scope of the World Health Organization, as a pillar of the United Nations Organization, to take measures to prevent such a humanitarian tragedy.**

We are at your entire disposal for further information.

Yours sincerely,

BATEL