Ahead of Expected Judgment in Appeal, Civil Society Organizations Globally Call for the Release of Ahmed Douma

Joint Statements · Egypt · 10 July 2026

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from across the globe, call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Egyptian activist, poet, and political writer Ahmed Douma.

On July 16, 2026, the Fifth Settlement Appellate Misdemeanour Court is expected to issue its judgment in the appeal challenging the one-year prison sentence handed down to Douma last month on June 3, 2026. Douma had been referred to trial over an article he had published in Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, "From a Prison Within the State to a State Within the Prison," which used examples from around the world to present an argument as to why political imprisonment is destabilizing for the state. Over this article and a social media post on detention conditions, he was convicted on charges of publishing "false news and rumors inside and outside the country that would disturb public order." He has been in Egyptian state custody since April 6, 2026.

Douma should have never been arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced in the first place. For a political writer to face judicial harassment for a critical opinion piece published on a well-recognized media outlet is a severe violation of Douma's right to freedom of expression and an escalation by Egyptian authorities against those offering an alternate perspective and raising important questions for peaceful debate and discussion. At a time in which Egypt is purporting to be a leader on the international stage as global conflicts unfold, continuing to target peaceful forms of dissent is a counter-productive step that neither makes the country nor the region more stable and more secure.

In its reasoning for his conviction and one-year sentence, the first instance court left no doubt that Douma was prosecuted solely for exercising his legitimate right to freedom of expression and promoting the human rights of Egyptian prisoners. The court argued that his opinion article "included allegations that the defendant presented as established facts entailing that state institutions deliberately terrorize citizens and use reform and rehabilitation centers as methods for years-long disappearance…which suggests -contrary to reality- that state institutions and officials violate the Constitution and law." The court handed down the guilty verdict after denying most of defense motions, including the request to hear all defense witnesses or inspect prison conditions.

Prior to this most recent sentence, Douma had already spent over a decade in prison for his constitutionally-protected exercise of freedom of expression and association, where he had been subject to torture and other ill-treatment. When he was finally released on a presidential pardon in

August 2023, he was placed on travel ban, faced impediments preventing him from being able to pursue his post-graduate studies, and was subject to extensive judicial harassment. In the period of time between August 2023 and his most recent arrest, Douma was summoned by prosecutors on at least six occasions for his social media posts, writings, and activism and made to pay bail totalling 230,000 Egyptian Pounds.

We, the undersigned, call on the Egyptian authorities to cease all forms of judicial harassment against Douma. We additionally call on the Egyptian authorities to promptly lift the travel ban that continues to remain in place against him and that constitutes a violation of his right to freedom of movement.

Signatories

- American Committee for Middle East Rights (ACMER)
- Arab Center for Law and Society Studies (ACLSS)
- Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession
- Arab Foundation for Civil Society and Human Rights Support
- Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
- Committee for Justice (CFJ)
- Committee to Protect Journalists
- DAWN (Democracy in the Arab World Now)
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
- EgyptWide for Human Rights
- El Nadeem Center
- EuroMed Rights
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms
- Law and Democracy Support Foundation
- MENA Prison Forum
- MENA Rights Group
- Najda for Human Rights
- PEN International
- People in Need

- REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression
- Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center
- Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- TheirRight
- UMAM Documentation & Research
- Wasl for Human Rights

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HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · info@humena.org