

Advocacy dossier

Ahmed Douma

أحمد دومة

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Egypt**

Egyptian writer and central figure of the January 25 revolution. Pardoned by President al-Sisi in August 2023 after nearly ten years in prison; questioned on fresh false-news charges in September 2025 and released on bail, then detained on 6 April 2026 and sentenced on 3 June 2026 to one year in prison, a sentence upheld on appeal on 16 July 2026.

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The case at a glance

Egyptian writer and central figure of the January 25 revolution. Pardoned by President al-Sisi in August 2023 after nearly ten years in prison; questioned on fresh false-news charges in September 2025 and released on bail, then detained on 6 April 2026 and sentenced on 3 June 2026 to one year in prison, a sentence upheld on appeal on 16 July 2026.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **6 Apr 2026**	Country **Egypt**

Sentence Originally life imprisonment + EGP 17m fine (Feb 2015); reduced on retrial to 15 years and an EGP 6m fine (January 2019); presidential pardon issued 19 August 2023. One year in prison with hard labour for false news (New Cairo Misdemeanours Court, 3 June 2026), upheld on appeal 16 July 2026; held since 6 April 2026.

Charges Original case: assaulting security forces, rioting and possession of weapons during the December 2011 Cabinet clashes. Post-pardon investigations: spreading false news domestically and abroad to harm state prestige (Penal Code arts. 102 bis, 188).

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Ahmed Douma immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

04 Provide Ahmed Douma with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

05 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Ahmed Douma and on any family members affected by the same order.

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Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Denial of medical care UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Physical assault International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Travel ban International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

How the case unfolded

2009

Arrest

Arrested after a Gaza solidarity mission

He was arrested after joining a peaceful solidarity mission to Gaza, tortured, and sentenced by a military court to one year in prison.

12 January 2012

Arrest

Arrested in January 2012

Security forces arrested Douma, then aged 25, on 12 January 2012 in relation to his participation in the Cabinet Offices sit-in.

April 2012

Release

Released after three months

He was released after three months

December 2013

Solitary confinement imposed

Four years and eight months in solitary confinement

he was held in solitary confinement for four years and eight months in total for prolonged periods of time, between December 2013 until January 2020

3 December 2013

Arrest

Arrested in protest law case

Police arrested him in early December 2013 under the new protest law, over a demonstration outside the Shura Council.

22 December 2013

Conviction

Sentenced to three years under the protest law

A court sentenced him, with Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel, to three years in prison and a fine of EGP 50,000 under the protest law. The Court of Cassation upheld the sentence on 27 January 2015.

4 February 2015

Conviction

Sentenced to life imprisonment plus a 17m EGP fine

A criminal court convicted him in a mass trial of over 200 defendants without individualised evidence, imposing a life sentence and one of the largest fines ever handed down in a protest-related case.

October 2017

Appeal: judgment quashed

Court of Cassation overturns life sentence

The Court of Cassation overturned the life sentence in the Cabinet clashes case and ordered a retrial.

9 January 2019

Conviction

Retrial reduces sentence to 15 years

After the Court of Cassation overturned the original verdict, a retrial sentenced him to 15 years in prison and a fine of EGP 6 million.

July 2020

Appeal: judgment upheld

Court of Cassation upholds conviction and sentence

In July 2020, the Court of Cassation, Egypt's highest court, upheld his conviction and sentence.

2021

Other act

Security officials force publisher to withdraw his poetry collection

Security officials forced the publishing house to withdraw the poetry collection from the book fair.

August 2023

Travel ban imposed

Placed under a travel ban

he was placed on travel ban

19 August 2023

Pardon

Presidential pardon

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pardoned him on 19 August 2023.

19 August 2023

Release

Released under presidential pardon after almost 10 years

President al-Sisi included him in a pardon announced through the National Dialogue. He walked out of Badr 1 the same day, embraced his daughter for the first time as a free man.

November 2024

Interrogation

First post-pardon investigation on false-news charges

The State Security Prosecution questioned him over social media posts about the ship Kathrin and charged him with spreading false news. He was released on EGP 20,000 bail pending investigation.

28 July 2025

Interrogation

Questioned by State Security Prosecution, released on bail

The Supreme State Security Prosecution summoned and questioned him, charged him with spreading false news and related offences, and released him on EGP 50,000 bail.

September 2025

Interrogation

Questioned again by State Security Prosecution, released on bail

The Supreme State Security Prosecution questioned him for more than four hours on charges of spreading false news and released him on EGP 50,000 bail. It was the fourth such investigation since November 2024.

21 December 2025

Travel ban imposed

Travel ban imposed pending continuing investigations

A court issued a fresh travel ban barring him from leaving Egypt for the duration of the pending state-security investigations.

20 January 2026

Conditional release

Arrested at home without a warrant, released on bail

National Security officers arrested him at home without a warrant and questioned him for about 12 hours. The Public Prosecution charged him with spreading false information and released him on EGP 100,000 bail. It was his seventh arrest since his 2023 release.

6 April 2026

Arrest

Arrested at the Supreme State Security Prosecution

Summoned to the Supreme State Security Prosecution and arrested after a six-hour interrogation, in case 2449 of 2026. Accused of publishing false news and statements with intent to disturb public peace, over an article and social media posts about conditions faced by former political prisoners. Four days of pretrial detention were ordered at the first session.

9 April 2026

Pretrial detention renewed

Remand detention extended

A Cairo court extended his remand detention by a further 15 days.

23 April 2026

Appeal outcome

Appeal rejected and continued detention upheld

On 23 April 2026, the Court of Appeal rejected the appeal filed by Ahmed Douma and upheld his continued detention.

27 April 2026

Referral to trial

Referred to trial by the prosecution

The prosecution referred Douma to trial on 27 April 2026.

3 June 2026

Conviction

Sentenced to one year in prison over published writing

A Cairo court sentenced him to one year in prison for publishing false news and rumours. He had been held in pretrial detention for close to two months between the April arrest and the sentence.

16 July 2026

Appeal: judgment upheld

Appeal court upholds the one-year sentence

The Fifth Settlement Appellate Misdemeanour Court in Cairo rejected the appeal and upheld the one-year sentence issued on 3 June 2026.

19 October 2026

Context

Lawyer requests conditional release

A lawyer from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights asked the Interior Ministry's Community Protection Sector to grant him conditional release, as he had served more than half of the one-year sentence. No decision has been reported.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again on 12 November 2026. Ahmed Douma remains in prison serving the one-year sentence upheld on appeal on 16 July 2026; a request for his conditional release, filed on 19 October 2026 after he had served more than half of the term, has had no reported decision.

Background and work

Ahmed Douma is a writer, poet and one of the most recognisable activists of the January 25 revolution. He participated in protests against Hosni Mubarak before 2011, against the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in 2011-12, and against Mohamed Morsi in 2013. He published prison poetry from successive cells under each of those rulers and became, for a generation of Egyptians, a barometer of how much speech the state would tolerate at any given moment.

Arrest and detention

He was arrested on 3 December 2013 under the protest law, over a demonstration outside the Shura Council, and on 22 December 2013 a court sentenced him to three years in prison. He was also tried separately over the so-called "Cabinet clashes" of December 2011. In February 2015 a criminal court sentenced him to life imprisonment together with a fine of 17 million Egyptian pounds, in a mass trial of more than 200 co-defendants conducted without individual examination of evidence. The verdict was widely condemned as politically motivated.

Release

Egypt's Court of Cassation overturned the life sentence in 2017 and ordered a retrial. In January 2019 a retrial reduced his sentence to fifteen years and a fine of 6 million Egyptian pounds. On 19 August 2023, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi included him in a presidential pardon issued at the recommendation of the National Dialogue's civil-society track, after he had served nearly ten years. He walked out of Badr 1 prison the same day.

Current status as of 2026

He has remained in Egypt and has continued writing, newspaper columns, a memoir, occasional essays, though under heavy surveillance. He has been summoned for questioning repeatedly since his pardon, repeatedly prosecuted on fresh "spreading false news" charges in 2024 and 2025, and released on bail each time. In late September 2025 the Supreme State Security Prosecution questioned him again and released him on bail. In January 2026 he was arrested at home and released on bail. He was detained on 6 April 2026 and on 3 June 2026 sentenced to one year in prison, a sentence upheld on appeal on 16 July 2026. His pardon, in effect, has not freed him.

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