

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

AHMED GAMAL ZIADA

أحمد جمال زيادة

At liberty **Egypt**

Egyptian journalist and editor-in-chief of Zawia3, living in exile in Belgium since 2019. He was held in pretrial detention from December 2013 to 2015 over his coverage of protests and acquitted, and was detained again in 2019 on false news charges. In August 2023, Egyptian security forces arrested his father and charged him with belonging to a banned group, punishing the family for Ahmed's reporting in the run-up to the December 2023 presidential election.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-016

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Egyptian journalist and editor-in-chief of Zawia3, living in exile in Belgium since 2019. He was held in pretrial detention from December 2013 to 2015 over his coverage of protests and acquitted, and was detained again in 2019 on false news charges. In August 2023, Egyptian security forces arrested his father and charged him with belonging to a banned group, punishing the family for Ahmed's reporting in the run-up to the December 2023 presidential election.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**29 Jan 2019**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
CHARGES	**Illegal assembly (2013 case, acquitted)** **Assaulting police officers (2013 case, acquitted)** **Spreading false news (2019 case)**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Ahmed Gamal Ziada in Egypt.

02 Cease the use of family members as leverage to pressure Ahmed Gamal Ziada into silence.

03 Drop any fabricated charges against family members and unblock their travel, financial, and professional rights.

04 Comply with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which explicitly prohibits reprisals against the families of defenders.

05 Immediately end all transnational targeting of Ahmed Gamal Ziada, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.



Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/ahmed-gamal-ziada/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Criminalisation of solidarity	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5
Defamation and smear campaign	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Denial of family visits	UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 58
Enforced disappearance	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16
Forced exile	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12(4)
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Press freedom violation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19
Reprisal against relatives	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Transnational repression	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

28 December 2013

ARREST

Arrested covering protests at Al-Azhar University

Ahmed Gamal Ziada was arrested while covering clashes at Al-Azhar University as a photojournalist for the Yaqeen news network. His camera was seized and he was charged with illegal assembly and assaulting police.

2015

ACQUITTAL

Acquitted in the Al-Azhar case

The court acquitted him in the case over his Al-Azhar coverage.

2015

RELEASE

Released after more than a year in pretrial detention

He was released after 16 to 18 months in pretrial detention. He has said he was tortured in detention.

29 January 2019

ARREST

Detained at Cairo airport on return from Tunisia

Security officers stopped him at Cairo International Airport on his return from Tunisia, where he had been reporting for Inkyfada. He was held incommunicado and his whereabouts were unknown for about two weeks.

13 February 2019

REAPPEARANCE IN CUSTODY

Reappears before prosecutors; charged with false news

He reappeared before prosecutors and was charged with spreading false news. His detention was extended on 16 February.

March 2019

CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Released on bail

A court ordered his release on bail of EGP 10,000 on 2 March 2019, and he was freed in March. Some sources date his release to April 2019.

December 2019

DEPARTURE INTO EXILE

Leaves Egypt for Belgium

He left Egypt for Belgium, where he has lived and worked in exile since.

2023

DEFENDER ACTIVITY

Founds Zawia3 in Brussels

He founded the investigative news website Zawia Thalitha (Zawia3) in Brussels.

22 August 2023

CONTEXT

Father arrested in Giza in reprisal for his journalism

Plainclothes security officers arrested his father, Gamal Abdel Hamid Ziada, near his workshop in Giza. They took his phone and drove him to an undisclosed location, where he was blindfolded, handcuffed and questioned repeatedly about his son's journalism. One interrogator called his son the fleeing journalist. His father runs a small clothing workshop and has never been involved in political or human rights activity.

23 August 2023

CONTEXT

Father charged before the Supreme State Security Prosecution

His father was brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution and charged with misuse of social media, spreading false news and belonging to a banned group in Case 2064/2023, then ordered held for fifteen days pending investigation. The family was barred from visiting him despite his documented medical history.

20 September 2023

CONTEXT

Father released; his case stays open

The Supreme State Security Prosecution ordered his father's release on 19 September 2023, and he reached home early on 20 September. The case against his father stays open.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Ahmed Gamal Ziada is an Egyptian journalist, investigative reporter, and human rights researcher. He is the editor-in-chief of Zawia3, an independent news website that publishes reporting on social, economic, and political rights in Egypt. His investigative work has been featured in *Masr Alarabia*, *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, and Al Jazeera. Before leaving Egypt, he worked as a human rights researcher with several Egyptian rights organizations. He is a consistent advocate for freedom of expression and the release of imprisoned journalists.

Zawia3 has published critical analysis of the Egyptian government's economic policies, the state of political freedoms, and the so-called national dialogue initiated by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. In the months leading up to the December 2023 presidential election, Ahmed wrote several articles documenting restrictions on political organizing, media, and civil society. The website has also published investigations into arbitrary detention and prison conditions.

Previous Arrests and Torture

Ahmed Gamal Ziada has been arrested twice by Egyptian authorities for his journalism. On 28 December 2013, he was arrested while covering protests at Al-Azhar University as a photojournalist for Yaqeen. He was held in pretrial detention for 16 to 18 months and subjected to physical violence and torture. He was acquitted and released in 2015. On 29 January 2019, he was detained at Cairo airport on his return from Tunisia, held incommunicado for about two weeks, and then charged with spreading false news. He was released on bail in March 2019.

Following his release in 2019, Ahmed left Egypt and relocated to Belgium, where he is pursuing studies in international relations and political science. He continues to report on human rights violations in Egypt and to advocate for press freedom from exile.

Arrest of His Father

On 22 August 2023, Egyptian security forces arrested Gamal Abdel Hamid Ziada, Ahmed's father, near his workplace in Giza. Plainclothes officers detained him without presenting an arrest warrant. They confiscated his mobile phone and took him to an unknown location. During interrogation, he was blindfolded and handcuffed. Officers questioned him repeatedly about his son's journalism. One interrogator referred to Ahmed as "the fleeing journalist" and accused him of inciting dissent against the state.

Gamal Abdel Hamid Ziada is a small-business owner who operates a clothing manufacturing workshop. He uses social media exclusively to promote his business. He has no history of involvement in human rights work, political activism, or prior arrest. His detention appears to have been carried out solely

because of his family relationship to Ahmed.

Charges and Detention Conditions

Gamal Abdel Hamid Ziada was brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution and charged with three offenses: misuse of social media, spreading false news, and belonging to a banned group. He was ordered held for fifteen days pending investigation. His family was denied permission to visit him, despite his documented medical conditions and the family's concerns for his health.

The charges against Gamal mirror the language routinely used by Egyptian prosecutors to detain journalists, activists, and human rights defenders. In this case, they have been applied to a man with no public profile, no history of political activity, and no connection to journalism beyond his son.

Transnational Repression and Family Targeting

The arrest of Gamal Abdel Hamid Ziada follows a well-documented pattern of Egyptian authorities targeting the relatives of exiled dissidents, journalists, and human rights defenders. By detaining family members inside Egypt, the state seeks to pressure or silence critics living abroad. Relatives have been subjected to arrest, interrogation, prosecution, travel bans, and asset freezes as proxies for individuals beyond the reach of Egyptian security forces.

Ahmed Gamal Ziada's case is emblematic of this transnational repression strategy. His father's arrest occurred shortly after Ahmed published articles critical of the government in the lead-up to the December 2023 presidential election. The interrogation focused not on Gamal's own conduct, but entirely on his son's work. The detention serves as both punishment and warning.

International Context

Ahmed Gamal Ziada currently resides in Belgium, where he continues his journalism and his studies. His father was released in September 2023, but the case against him, on charges widely understood to be politically motivated, remained open as of September 2023. The case illustrates the extraterritorial reach of Egyptian state repression and the use of family members as instruments of coercion against exiled defenders.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express grave concern about the campaign of reprisals targeting the family of human rights defender Ahmed Gamal Ziada, journalist, columnist, investigative reporter, and editor-in-chief of the independent news website Zawia3; human rights researcher and advocate for press freedom and the release of imprisoned journalists. Punishing relatives for the peaceful work of a defender is collective punishment and a violation of international law.

Egyptian security forces arrested the father of exiled journalist Ahmed Gamal Ziada in August 2023, interrogating him solely about his son's reporting from Belgium and charging him with belonging to a banned group, a clear case of family-targeting to silence an exiled critic.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Ahmed Gamal Ziada in Egypt;
2. Cease the use of family members as leverage to pressure Ahmed Gamal Ziada into silence;
3. Drop any fabricated charges against family members and unblock their travel, financial, and professional rights;
4. Comply with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which explicitly prohibits reprisals against the families of defenders;
5. Immediately end all transnational targeting of Ahmed Gamal Ziada, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.

I will continue to monitor the welfare of Ahmed Gamal Ziada's family in Egypt and will publicly raise concerns at every level until the reprisals stop.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026