

Advocacy dossier

Ahmed Nazir El-Helw

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Detained (pretrial) **Egypt**

Ahmed Nazir El-Helw is an Egyptian lawyer who has spent much of his career defending political prisoners and advocating for the rule of law. Arrested in November 2022, he remains in detention while on trial and now suffers from paralysis.

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The case at a glance

Ahmed Nazir El-Helw is an Egyptian lawyer who has spent much of his career defending political prisoners and advocating for the rule of law. Arrested in November 2022, he remains in detention while on trial and now suffers from paralysis.

Status	Arrested	Country
Detained (pretrial)	**7 Nov 2022**	**Egypt**

Charges
Joining a terrorist group with knowledge of its objectives
Financing a terrorist group
Spreading false information and data on social media
Inciting protests
Misusing social media platforms

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Ahmed Nazir El-Helw 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 Nazir El-Helw with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

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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

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

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

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

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

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

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How the case unfolded

7 November 2022

Arrest

Arrest by security forces

Security forces stopped Ahmed Nazir El-Helw near his home in Fifth Settlement, east of Cairo, after he had attended interrogations at the Supreme State Security Prosecution, amid arrests ahead of the 11 November 2022 protest calls.

7 November 2022

Start of enforced disappearance

Held in an unknown place

After his arrest, El-Helw was held for about a week in an unknown place before he appeared before prosecutors.

13 November 2022

Reappearance in custody

Appears before State Security Prosecution

El-Helw appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution in case 1940 of 2022, accused of joining a terrorist group, spreading false news and misusing social media. He was ordered held in pretrial detention.

9 September 2024

Detention conditions and health

Severe health deterioration reported

His wife filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor saying that he had become paralysed and unable to move, citing untreated spinal disc problems, and asked for his release on health grounds and hospital treatment at his own expense.

20 November 2024

Pretrial detention renewed

Detention renewed in his absence

The terrorism circuit renewed El-Helw's detention in his absence while he was in a medical facility after surgery.

4 December 2024

Referral to trial

Referral to criminal trial

The Supreme State Security Prosecution referred El-Helw, with 119 other defendants in case 1940 of 2022, to trial before the terrorism circuits at the Badr court complex, on charges including joining and financing a terrorist group, spreading false information, inciting protests and misusing social media. He was kept in custody.

January 2026

Hearing

Appears in court unable to walk

El-Helw appeared before the criminal court at the Badr court complex in case 1940 of 2022, helped by two guards. He told the court that he suffers from quadriplegia and that his spine needs urgent surgery. No verdict has been reported.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again on 12 November 2026. Ahmed Nazir El-Helw remains in detention, on trial with 119 other defendants in case 1940 of 2022 at the Badr court complex; in January 2026 he told the court he suffers from quadriplegia, and no verdict has been reported.

Background and Work

Ahmed Nazir El-Helw is a cassation lawyer with decades of experience in Egypt's higher courts. Born in 1965, he built a reputation for taking on politically sensitive cases, particularly those involving political prisoners and individuals prosecuted under national security legislation. His work focused on civil and political rights, often representing clients who faced charges rooted in their political activities or expression.

Cassation lawyers in Egypt handle appeals to the Court of Cassation, the country's highest ordinary court. The role requires both technical legal expertise and a willingness to navigate a judicial system that has become increasingly aligned with executive authority. El-Helw operated in this environment for years, representing clients whose cases were often predetermined by the nature of the charges and the identity of the prosecutor.

Arrest and Detention

Ahmed Nazir El-Helw was arrested on 7 November 2022, held for about a week in an unknown place, and placed under investigation in Case No. 1940 of 2022, a State Security case. State Security cases in Egypt are prosecuted by the Supreme State Security Prosecution, a body that has been widely criticised for procedural violations, indefinite pre-trial detention, and lack of judicial independence.

He was held in pre-trial detention and subjected to repeated renewals, a practice that has become standard in such cases. Under Egyptian law, pre-trial detention can be extended indefinitely through a series of 45-day renewals, and defendants in State Security cases routinely spend years in detention before trial. El-Helw's case followed this pattern.

He is currently detained in the 10th of Ramadan Rehabilitation and Correctional Complex, a facility located east of Cairo. Conditions in the facility are reported to be poor, with overcrowding, limited access to medical care, and restricted family visitation.

Charges and Trial Referral

On 4 December 2024, more than two years after his arrest, the Supreme State Security Prosecution referred El-Helw to criminal trial. The charges against him include joining a terrorist group with knowledge of its objectives, financing a terrorist group, spreading false information and data on social media, inciting protests, and misusing social media platforms.

These charges are commonly deployed against lawyers, journalists, activists, and others whose work is deemed threatening to the state. The term "terrorist group" is often applied broadly and without clear evidentiary basis. Trials in such cases are frequently characterised by reliance on coerced confessions, restricted access to legal counsel, and

verdicts that reflect prosecutorial demands rather than judicial independence.

Health and Detention Conditions

El-Helw's health has deteriorated significantly during his detention. He now suffers from paralysis and has lost mobility, conditions that require urgent and sustained medical intervention. There is no public information indicating that he is receiving adequate treatment or that prison authorities have taken measures to address his medical needs.

Denial of medical care is a documented pattern in Egyptian prisons, particularly for political detainees. The lack of timely intervention has led to preventable suffering and, in some cases, death. El-Helw's condition places him at serious risk.

Legal and International Context

El-Helw's case is part of a broader campaign of judicial harassment targeting lawyers who represent political prisoners or engage in human rights work. Egyptian authorities have increasingly treated legal defence as a form of political opposition, arresting lawyers, freezing their assets, and prosecuting them under terrorism-related charges.

Pre-trial detention in Egypt has been described by international human rights bodies as a form of punishment without trial. The prolonged detention of individuals like El-Helw, combined with poor conditions and denial of medical care, constitutes a serious violation of international human rights standards, including the prohibition on torture and inhuman treatment.

In January 2026 he appeared before a criminal court at the Badr court complex, unable to walk unaided. He remains in detention, and no verdict has been reported. His case exemplifies the risks faced by lawyers who choose to defend the rights of others in Egypt's increasingly repressive legal environment.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/ahmed-nazir-el-helw/

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