Advocacy dossier

Aida Seif El-Dawla

عايدة سيف الدولة

At liberty **Egypt**

Egyptian psychiatrist and co-founder of the El Nadeem Center, one of the Arab world's oldest torture rehabilitation centres. Barred from travel from 2016 until Case 173 was closed in March 2024, she was charged with spreading false news in two new cases in 2026 and released on bail in February and again on 9 November 2026.

01
The case at a glance

Egyptian psychiatrist and co-founder of the El Nadeem Center, one of the Arab world's oldest torture rehabilitation centres. Barred from travel from 2016 until Case 173 was closed in March 2024, she was charged with spreading false news in two new cases in 2026 and released on bail in February and again on 9 November 2026.

Status **At liberty**	Country **Egypt**
Sentence	No criminal sentence. A travel ban imposed in November 2016 under Case 173/2011 was lifted when the case against El Nadeem was closed in March 2024. The Ministry of Health ordered El Nadeem closed in February 2016; the Administrative Court overturned the order in January 2021. Released on bail of EGP 100,000 in Case 809/2026 in February 2026.
Charges	Broadcasting false news to disturb public peace (2026, Case 809/2026) Receiving foreign funding to harm national interests; operating an unlicensed civil society organisation (Penal Code art. 78; Law 84/2002 and Law 70/2017 on associations). Investigated as a person of interest in Foreign Funding Case 173/2011, which was closed for El Nadeem in March 2024.

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Aida Seif El-Dawla and on any family members affected by the same order.

02 Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work.

03 Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

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

03

How the case unfolded

February 2016

Context

Ministry of Health orders El Nadeem closed

The Ministry of Health ordered the closure of the El Nadeem Center on licensing grounds. The Centre challenged the order in the administrative courts.

23 November 2016

Travel ban imposed

Stopped at Cairo airport and barred from travel

Stopped at Cairo International Airport and told she could not travel, in connection with Foreign Funding Case 173/2011.

February 2017

Context

Police close El Nadeem premises

Police closed the El Nadeem Center premises in downtown Cairo while the court challenge to the closure order was still pending.

21 January 2021

Context

Administrative Court overturns El Nadeem closure order

The Administrative Court overturned the 2016 decision to close the El Nadeem Center.

20 March 2024

Travel ban lifted

Case 173 closed for El Nadeem and travel ban lifted

The investigating judge decided there were no grounds to pursue criminal charges against El Nadeem and four other rights groups in Case 173/2011. The decision ended the travel bans and asset freezes on the staff of the groups named. She said the case was closed and her travel ban lifted.

15 February 2026

Interrogation

Interrogated at the Dokki Prosecution over the Centre's torture archive

Questioned at the Dokki Prosecution Office in Supreme State Security Prosecution Case 809/2026, without having been told in advance what the charges would be. An investigator informed her she was accused of spreading false news with intent to disrupt public security, and questioned her entirely about the two pages of the Nadeem Centre's 2025 media archive that list police officers and prison doctors named in reports of torture and ill-treatment. Asked how many complaints had been filed and by whom, the investigator said they were too many to count and refused to name the complainants. Two State Security investigation reports appear to be the sole basis of the case.

15 February 2026

Conditional release

Released on bail of one hundred thousand Egyptian pounds

Released on bail set at a sum representing more than a year's income for many Egyptians. The case remains open and she faces the possibility of further summons and trial.

1 November 2026

Summons

Summoned by the Cairo Appeals Prosecution in Case 30/2026

The Cairo Appeals Prosecution summoned her for questioning in a second case, Case 30/2026, at its Rehab office on 1 November 2026. The prosecution agreed to move the session to 9 November 2026 for health reasons.

9 November 2026

Interrogation

Questioned and charged in Case 30/2026

The Cairo Appeals Prosecution questioned her at its Rehab office in Case 30/2026 and charged her with broadcasting and publishing false news at home and abroad and with using an internet account to do so. She acknowledged that the account was hers and denied the charges.

9 November 2026

Conditional release

Released on bail of fifty thousand Egyptian pounds

At the end of the questioning the Cairo Appeals Prosecution ordered her release on bail of EGP 50,000. It has not said whether the case will be referred to trial.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again on 12 November 2026. On 9 November 2026 the Cairo Appeals Prosecution questioned Aida Seif El-Dawla in a second case, Case 30/2026, charged her with publishing false news and using an internet account, and released her on bail of EGP 50,000; she remains under investigation in both this case and Case 809/2026, in which the lawyer Mahienour El-Massry attended her questioning in February 2026.

Background and work

Aida Seif El-Dawla is a psychiatrist, professor and co-founder of the El Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture. Established in 1993 in downtown Cairo, El Nadeem became one of the first specialised torture rehabilitation services in the Arab world, providing psychological, medical and legal support to survivors of police and prison violence and to women survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She has also been a senior member of the Nadeem-affiliated Working Group Against Torture in Egypt and has written extensively on the politics of psychiatry and the medicalisation of dissent.

Arrest and detention

She has never been formally arrested. Instead, the Egyptian authorities have pursued a sustained campaign of administrative and reputational pressure against her and her centre. The Ministry of Health ordered the closure of El Nadeem in February 2016 on a series of pretextual licensing grounds. The centre challenged the order in the administrative courts, and police closed the premises in February 2017 while the case was pending. In January 2021 the Administrative Court overturned the 2016 closure decision.

Conviction and imprisonment

No criminal verdict has ever been entered against her. She was, however, placed under a travel ban on 23 November 2016, when she was stopped at Cairo International Airport and told she was either a defendant in, or a witness to, a criminal case. The case in question is the long-running Foreign Funding Case 173/2011 against independent NGOs, in which dozens of Egyptian rights defenders have been investigated, banned from travel and had their assets frozen for receiving foreign funding to do human rights work. On 20 March 2024 the investigating judge closed the case against El Nadeem, a decision that also ended the travel bans on the staff of the groups named.

Current status as of 2026

She remains in Cairo. El Nadeem operates from new premises in a reduced capacity, having survived multiple eviction attempts. On 15 February 2026 she was questioned in Supreme State Security Prosecution Case 809/2026 over the Centre's torture archive, charged with spreading false news and released on bail of EGP 100,000. In November 2026 the Cairo Appeals Prosecution summoned her in a second case, Case 30/2026, and the questioning was postponed to 9 November for health reasons. On 9 November 2026 she was questioned, charged with broadcasting and publishing false news at home and abroad and with using an internet account, and released on bail of

EGP 50,000. She continues to publish, lecture and provide clinical supervision in restricted forms. She remains one of the most senior and respected voices in the Egyptian human rights movement.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/aida-seif-el-dawla/

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