

Advocacy dossier

Alaa Abdel Fattah

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At liberty **Egypt**

Alaa Abdel Fattah is a blogger and software developer who spent most of the period from 2013 to 2025 in Egyptian prisons, latest on a five-year false news sentence. He was pardoned and released in September 2025 and, after his travel ban was lifted, moved to the United Kingdom in December 2025.

01
The case at a glance

Alaa Abdel Fattah is a blogger and software developer who spent most of the period from 2013 to 2025 in Egyptian prisons, latest on a five-year false news sentence. He was pardoned and released in September 2025 and, after his travel ban was lifted, moved to the United Kingdom in December 2025.

Status	Arrested	Country
At liberty	**29 Sep 2019**	**Egypt**

Sentence Five years in prison for spreading false news (Emergency State Security misdemeanour court, 20 December 2021, no appeal possible); pardoned on 22 September 2025.

Charges Belonging to a terrorist group (accusation in the 2019 investigation)
Funding a terrorist group (accusation in the 2019 investigation)
Spreading false news undermining national security (convicted on 20 December 2021)
Using social media to commit publishing offenses (accusation in the 2019 investigation)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Alaa Abdel Fattah 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.

04 Immediately unfreeze the personal and organisational accounts of Alaa Abdel Fattah.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

Asset freeze UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 13

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

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)

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

7 May 2006

Arrest

Arrested at a protest for judicial independence

He was arrested at a protest in support of judicial independence.

20 June 2006

Release

Released

He was released after several weeks in detention.

30 October 2011

Arrest

Detained over the Maspero events

He was detained in connection with the Maspero events.

25 December 2011

Release

Released

He was released from detention in the Maspero case.

28 November 2013

Arrest

Arrested in a home raid after the Shura Council protest

He was arrested in a raid on his home after a protest outside the Shura Council against military trials of civilians.

March 2014

Conditional release

Released on bail

He was released on bail from Tora prison.

11 June 2014

Ruling in absentia

Sentenced in absentia to 15 years

A court sentenced him in absentia to 15 years in prison in the Shura Council protest case; a retrial was later granted.

11 June 2014

Re-arrest

Taken into custody outside the courtroom

He was taken into custody outside the courtroom after the verdict.

15 September 2014

Conditional release

Released pending retrial

The Cairo Criminal Court ordered his provisional release pending retrial.

27 October 2014

Re-arrest

Arrested again at the retrial

He was taken back into custody when he arrived for a session of his retrial.

23 February 2015

Conviction

Sentenced on retrial to five years

On retrial he was sentenced to five years in prison and five years of police probation.

29 March 2019

Reporting obligation imposed

Placed under probation after release

He was under probation after his release from Tora Prison in Cairo on 29 March 2019.

29 March 2019

Release

Released from Tora prison after a five-year sentence

following release from Cairo’s Tora prison on 29 March 2019, at the end of a five-year sentence

29 September 2019

Arrest

Arrested at probation station

Alaa Abdel Fattah was arrested at the Dokki police station where he was fulfilling his daily twelve-hour probation requirement.

29 September 2019

Charge filed

Charged under Criminal Case 1356/2019

Both Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed El-Baqer were charged with belonging to a terrorist group, funding a terrorist group, spreading false news, and using social media to commit publishing offenses, and remanded in pre-trial detention at Tora High Security prison 2.

19 November 2020

Terrorist list designation

Placed on terrorist list for five years

The Cairo Criminal Court placed Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed El-Baqer, along with twenty-seven other activists, on Egypt's terrorist list for five years, alleging membership in the banned Muslim Brotherhood. The ruling included a travel ban and asset freeze for three years.

19 November 2020

Case rotation (tadwir)

Added to new case with undisclosed charges

The Cairo Criminal Court added both Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed El-Baqer to State Security Case 1781 of 2019, for which the charges have not been disclosed.

2021

Complaint filed

Family files complaint with the Public Prosecutor

In 2021, his family filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor about incidents of torture in Tora Prison and threats against Alaa Abdel Fattah.

2021

Referral to trial

Referred to trial in Case 1228 of 2021

The three were referred to criminal trial in Case No. 1228 of 2021 (Emergency State Security Misdemeanours).

13 September 2021

Hearing

Pre-trial detention renewed for 45 days

The terrorism circuit of the State Security Court at Cairo Criminal Court renewed Alaa Abdel Fattah's pre-trial detention for another 45 days. He did not appear at the hearing.

13 September 2021

Detention conditions and health

Described severe distress to judge and lawyer

After the hearing, Alaa Abdel Fattah met with a judge and his lawyer and described severe distress after nearly two years in solitary confinement.

18 October 2021

Hearing

First hearing before emergency State Security court

The first hearing in the case was held on 18 October 2021 before the Emergency State Security Misdemeanours Court.

18 November 2021

Appeal: judgment upheld

Cassation court upholds terrorist listing

On 18 November 2021, the Court of Cassation rejected the final appeal against his inclusion in the “terrorism list.”

December 2021

Context

Granted British citizenship

He obtained British citizenship through his mother.

20 December 2021

Conviction

Sentenced to five years by emergency court

On 20 December 2021, the Misdemeanours Emergency State Security Court in Cairo sentenced Alaa Abdel Fattah to five years of imprisonment

14 November 2023

Complaint filed by the person

Urgent appeal filed with UN Working Group

On 14 November 2023, Alaa Abd El-Fattah and his family filed an urgent appeal with the UNWGAD, submitting that his continuing detention in Egypt is arbitrary and contrary to international law.

29 September 2024

Detention beyond the end of a sentence

Sentence completed; detention continued

Egyptian authorities refused to release Abdel Fattah after he completed his five-year sentence.

30 September 2024

Context

Mother Laila Soueif begins hunger strike

His mother Laila Soueif, a professor in Cairo, began a partial hunger strike to protest her son's continued detention.

15 February 2025

Statement by UN experts

UN experts call for release

Multiple UN human-rights experts publicly demanded his release, calling his detention arbitrary.

21 July 2025

Other act

Removed from Egypt's terrorist list

A Cairo criminal court removed him from Egypt's terrorist list, lifting restrictions that included an asset freeze and travel bans. His lawyer Khaled Ali announced the ruling. He remained in prison.

22 September 2025

Pardon

Presidential pardon

President al-Sisi pardoned him along with five other prisoners.

23 September 2025

Release

Freed after the presidential pardon

He was freed on 23 September 2025, the day after the pardon.

November 2025

Travel ban imposed

Blocked from leaving Egypt

Security forces blocked his departure from Egypt.

20 December 2025

Travel ban lifted

Removed from the travel ban list

The public prosecution removed him from the travel ban list.

26 December 2025

Context

Arrives in London to join his family

He travelled to the United Kingdom and arrived in London to join his family.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Alaa Abdel Fattah is free and has lived in the United Kingdom since 26 December 2025. A Cairo criminal court removed him from Egypt's terrorist list in July 2025, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pardoned him on 22 September 2025 and he was released the next day, and the prosecution lifted his travel ban on 20 December 2025. His co-defendants included lawyer Mohamed El-Baqer and blogger Mohamed Ibrahim, known as Oxygen, and his sister Sanaa Seif campaigned for his release.

Background and Work

Alaa Abdel Fattah is a software developer, blogger, and one of Egypt's most recognized digital rights defenders. He co-founded the Egyptian Blogger Network and developed online platforms that enabled Egyptians to share information and organize during periods of heightened repression. His technical skills and commitment to free expression made him a key figure in the country's early digital activism.

He became a prominent member of the "No to Military Trials for Civilians" movement, which documented and challenged the military judiciary's prosecution of civilians. His activism spanned more than a decade and included advocacy on torture, police brutality, and freedom of assembly. He was a vocal critic of successive governments, including under Mubarak, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Morsi, and Sisi.

He was jailed under each of them. He was held for several weeks in 2006 after a protest for judicial independence, and from October to December 2011 over the Maspero events. Arrested in a raid on his home in November 2013 after a protest against military trials, he was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in June 2014 and, on retrial in February 2015, to five years in prison and five years of probation. He was released on 29 March 2019 and had to spend his nights at a police station under probation.

The Arrest

On 29 September 2019, Alaa was arrested at the Dokki police station where he was fulfilling his daily twelve-hour probation requirement. He had been on supervised release following a previous conviction. His arrest came amid a broader crackdown following small protests in Cairo and other cities earlier that month.

Later the same day, his lawyer Mohamed El-Baqer, who is also the Director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, was arrested at the State Security Prosecution premises while attending an investigation session with Alaa. Both men were charged under Criminal Case 1356 of 2019 with belonging to a terrorist group, funding a terrorist group, spreading false news undermining national security, and using social media to commit publishing offenses. They were remanded in pre-trial detention at Tora High Security prison 2.

Detention Conditions and Health

Alaa was held in solitary confinement in Tora High Security prison 2 after his arrest. The conditions were severe. He was denied access to books, time in the prison yard, a radio, warm clothing during winter months, a mattress, and adequate ventilation in his cell. His family was repeatedly denied the

weekly letter that Egyptian law mandates prisoners be allowed to send.

On 13 September 2021, Alaa did not appear at a hearing where his pre-trial detention was renewed for a further 45 days. He was later able to meet with a judge and his lawyer, to whom he described severe distress. At that point, he had been in solitary confinement for nearly two years with no trial date set.

Legal Proceedings

Since their arrest, both Alaa and Mohamed El-Baqer have had their pre-trial detention renewed repeatedly by the Supreme State Security Prosecution and the Cairo Criminal Court. The renewals continued without substantive legal justification and without a trial being scheduled. The practice of indefinite pre-trial detention has become a standard tool for Egyptian authorities to detain activists and critics without conviction.

On 19 November 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court placed Alaa and Mohamed El-Baqer, along with twenty-seven other activists, on Egypt's terrorist list for five years. The court alleged that they had joined the banned Muslim Brotherhood, a charge used broadly against dissidents. The listing imposed a travel ban and asset freeze. On 21 July 2025 a Cairo criminal court removed him from the list. The court also added both men to a new case, State Security Case 1781 of 2019, but the charges in that case have not been disclosed.

International Response

Alaa Abdel Fattah's case has drawn sustained international attention. Human rights organizations have called for his immediate release and condemned the Egyptian government's use of counter-terrorism law to silence peaceful dissent. His detention was part of a broader pattern in Egypt in which pre-trial detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and judicial harassment are used systematically against activists, journalists, lawyers, and civil society members.

His case illustrates the Egyptian state's strategy of using vague national security charges and renewable detention orders to bypass the need for trial or conviction. The addition to the terrorist list and the imposition of asset freezes and travel bans further isolate defenders and their families, compounding the punitive effect of detention itself.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/alaa-abdel-fattah/

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