

Advocacy dossier

Ashraf Omar

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Detained (pretrial) **Egypt**

Ashraf Omar is an Egyptian editorial cartoonist for the independent outlet Al Manassa who has been detained since 22 July 2024 and is on trial on terrorism-related charges. On 12 October 2026 the Cairo Criminal Court adjourned to 14 December 2026 and rejected a request for his release.

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The case at a glance

Ashraf Omar is an Egyptian editorial cartoonist for the independent outlet Al Manassa who has been detained since 22 July 2024 and is on trial on terrorism-related charges. On 12 October 2026 the Cairo Criminal Court adjourned to 14 December 2026 and rejected a request for his release.

Status **Detained (pretrial)**	Arrested **22 Jul 2024**	Country **Egypt**
Charges Financing terrorism for the benefit of a terrorist group Participation in a terrorist group in pursuit of its objectives		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Ashraf Omar 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.

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How the case unfolded

22 July 2024

Arrest

Arrested at his home in Giza and held incommunicado

At about 1:30 am, plain-clothed and uniformed police arrested Ashraf Omar at his home in Giza and took him away blindfolded in an unmarked van. Lawyers who asked about him at a local police station were told he was not there, and his whereabouts were unknown for two days.

24 July 2024

Pretrial detention ordered

Appears before the Supreme State Security Prosecution

Ashraf Omar appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which investigated him on charges of joining a terrorist group, publishing false news and misusing social media, and ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigation.

16 January 2025

Reprisal against relatives

His wife arrested at their home

Security forces arrested his wife, Nada Mougheeth, at their home. She was later released on bail and is accused of membership in a terrorist group and spreading false news.

April 2025

Pretrial detention renewed

Detention renewed by video link with three journalists

A court renewed his pretrial detention for 45 days, together with that of the journalists Yasser Abu al-Ela, Ramadan Gouida and Ahmed Bayoumi, in a session held by video conference without the detainees present. It was the sixth such renewal. His defence team said he had been beaten and tortured by security forces during his arrest and held for several days at a National Security facility.

22 September 2025

Other act

UN experts call his detention arbitrary

UN human rights experts described his detention as arbitrary and unlawful and called for his immediate release. They said he was reportedly questioned about his cartoons and his reasons for drawing satirical images critical of the authorities, and that neither he nor his lawyer had been shown the evidence behind the accusations.

15 November 2025

Referral to trial

Referred to the Cairo Criminal Court

The Supreme State Security Prosecution referred his case to the Cairo Criminal Court. He and 11 co-defendants face charges of financing terrorism for the benefit of a terrorist group and participation in a terrorist group in pursuit of its objectives.

2 March 2026

Other act

CPJ and partners say no trial date set and no access to the case file

The Committee to Protect Journalists and four other organisations called for his immediate and unconditional release. They said that, almost 20 months after his arrest, no trial date had been set and neither he nor his lawyers had been given access to the case file.

10 May 2026

Hearing postponed

First trial session postponed

The first trial session before the Second Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court, sitting in the Badr Prison complex, was postponed so that the defence could review the case file. Asked by the judge, he denied all the allegations. His family, although permitted by the judge to attend, was refused entry by security at the prison gates.

13 July 2026

Hearing postponed

Trial postponed again

The second scheduled trial session was also postponed, with the trial adjourned to 12 October 2026.

23 July 2026

Other act

Sixteen organisations mark two years of detention

Sixteen cartoonist and press freedom organisations, among them RSF, CPJ, Cartooning for Peace, Cartoonists Rights and Index on Censorship, marked two years since his arrest and called for his immediate release, describing his detention as arbitrary.

12 October 2026

Hearing postponed

Trial adjourned as prosecution witness fails to appear; release request rejected

The Cairo Criminal Court, sitting at Badr Prison, adjourned the trial after a few minutes because the first prosecution witness, a National Security Sector investigating officer, did not appear. The court dismissed a defence request for his release on the ground that his pretrial detention had exceeded the legal limit. The trial was adjourned to 14 December 2026, and he remains in detention.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Ashraf Omar remains in pretrial detention after more than two years. On 12 October 2026 the Cairo Criminal Court adjourned his trial on terrorism-related charges to 14 December 2026 and rejected a request for his release.

Background and Work

Ashraf Omar is an Egyptian political cartoonist who publishes satirical drawings with the independent news outlet Al Manassa. The New Arab also describes him as a translator. His cartoons comment on public affairs in Egypt. According to Amnesty International, his last cartoon before his arrest criticised the government's plan to sell state assets, including to investors from the Gulf, and showed a thief offering a map of Egypt to a man in Gulf dress holding a shopping trolley.

He is married to Nada Mougheeth, who has campaigned publicly for his release.

The Arrest

At about 1:30 am on 22 July 2024, plain-clothed and uniformed police arrested him at his home in October Gardens, Giza. Closed-circuit footage reviewed by his wife showed police leading him, blindfolded, into an unmarked van, and his electronic devices were missing from the home. Lawyers who asked about him at the local police station were told he was not there, and his whereabouts were unknown for two days. His defence team later said he was beaten and tortured during the arrest and held for several days at a National Security facility.

On 24 July 2024 he appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which investigated him for joining a terrorist group, publishing false news and misusing social media, and ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigation. According to UN experts, he was questioned about his cartoons and his reasons for drawing satirical images critical of the authorities, and neither he nor his lawyer was shown the evidence behind the accusations. Amnesty International reported his arrest together with that of the journalist Khaled Mamdouh of Arabic Post, arrested in Cairo on 16 July 2024.

On 16 January 2025 security forces arrested his wife, Nada Mougheeth, at their home. She was released on bail and is accused of membership in a terrorist group and spreading false news.

Detention Conditions and Health

His pretrial detention has been renewed repeatedly. In April 2025 a court renewed it for 45 days by video link, without the detainees present, together with the detention of the journalists Yasser Abu Al-Ela, Ramadan Gouida and Ahmed Bayoumi; it was the sixth such renewal. In November 2025 a court in the Badr prison complex extended it again by 45 days. His trial sessions are held in the Badr Prison complex. In March 2026 the Committee to Protect Journalists said that neither he nor his defence had been given access to the case file.

Legal Proceedings

On 15 November 2025 the Supreme State Security Prosecution referred the case to the Cairo Criminal Court. He and 11 co-defendants face charges of

financing terrorism for the benefit of a terrorist group and participation in a terrorist group in pursuit of its objectives. His lawyer, Khaled Ali, said that his wife learned of the referral by chance and that he had not been allowed to review the referral order. The co-defendants include the journalists Yasser Abu Al-Ela and Ramadan Gouida.

The first session, before the Second Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court on 10 May 2026, was postponed so that the defence could review the file. Al Manassa reported that he denied all the allegations, that his family was refused entry by security at the prison gates although the judge had allowed them to attend, and that Yasser Abu Al-Ela and Ramadan Gouida were not brought to court. A second session on 13 July 2026 was also postponed, to 12 October 2026. On that date the court adjourned after a few minutes because the first prosecution witness, a National Security investigating officer, did not appear, and dismissed a defence request for his release on the ground that his pretrial detention had exceeded the legal limit. The trial was adjourned to 14 December 2026.

International Response

On 22 September 2025 UN human rights experts described his detention as arbitrary and unlawful and called for his immediate release. The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights condemned his continued detention. On 2 March 2026 the Committee to Protect Journalists and four other organisations called for an end to his judicial harassment. On 22 and 23 July 2026, two years after his arrest, sixteen organisations including Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Cartooning for Peace, Cartoonists Rights and Index on Censorship called for his immediate release. Amnesty International has also called for his release.

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