

Advocacy dossier

# Esraa Abdel Fattah

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**At liberty** **Egypt**

Egyptian journalist and co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement, known as "Facebook Girl" since 2008. Released on bail in July 2021 after almost two years in pre-trial detention; her case has never been formally closed.

# 01
# The case at a glance

Egyptian journalist and co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement, known as "Facebook Girl" since 2008. Released on bail in July 2021 after almost two years in pre-trial detention; her case has never been formally closed.

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|---|---|---|
| Status **At liberty** | Arrested **12 Oct 2019** | Country **Egypt** |
| Sentence No verdict, released on bail in July 2021 after 21 months in pre-trial detention. | | |
| Charges Joining a terrorist group, spreading false news and misusing social media (Case 488/2019, Anti-Terrorism Law 94/2015 arts. 12 and 13; Penal Code art. 102 bis), still on file<br>Joining a terrorist organisation (Case 855/2020, opened while she was detained), still on file<br>Foreign-funding investigation (Case 173/2011): charges dropped in December 2021 | | |

## What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Esraa 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.

## 02

# Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

**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

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

**Torture** Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

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

## 03

# How the case unfolded

**April 2008**

Arrest

### Detained over the 6 April 2008 strike call

She was detained for calling, through a Facebook group, for the 6 April 2008 general strike in support of textile workers in Mahalla, and became known as 'Facebook Girl'.

**April 2008**

Release

### Released after about two weeks in detention

She was released in April 2008 after about two weeks in detention.

**24 December 2014**

Travel ban imposed

### Placed on travel-ban list in foreign-funding case

She was put on the travel-ban list as a precaution in the foreign-funding investigation, Case 173/2011.

**13 January 2015**

Context

### Stopped from boarding a plane at Cairo airport

Airport officers stopped her from boarding a plane under the travel ban.

**12 October 2019**

Arrest

### Detained in Cairo and tortured at a National Security site

Plain-clothes officers took her from her car in Cairo to a National Security site, where she was held for hours, beaten, choked with her own top and hung by it, and kept standing in handcuffs to force her to unlock her phone.

**13 October 2019**

Charge filed

### Formally charged with terrorism and false news offences

A prosecutor ordered her pre-trial detention on charges connected to her journalism and her activism with the April 6 Youth Movement. She was transferred to Qanater women's prison.

**22 November 2019**

Context

### Suspends hunger strike for health reasons

She suspended the hunger strike she had started after her arrest, because of her health.

**December 2019**

Context

### Announces full hunger strike against detention renewals

She announced a full hunger strike in protest at the renewal of her detention.

**30 August 2020**

Charge filed

### Questioned in new Case 855/2020 while still detained

State Security prosecutors questioned her in a new case, 855/2020, on the charge of joining a terrorist organisation, while she was still held in Case 488/2019.

**17 July 2021**

Conditional release

### Released on bail after 21 months of pre-trial detention

A counter-terrorism circuit ordered her release on precautionary measures. The case itself was not closed and remained on file.

**5 December 2021**

Travel ban lifted

### Removed from travel-ban list; Case 173 charges dropped

The investigating judge in the foreign-funding case, 173/2011, accepted her lawyer's request, removed her from the travel-ban list she had been on since December 2014, and dropped the charges against her in that case. She then travelled to Paris.

04

# The full story

**Update, 12 November 2026:** Esraa Abdel Fattah has been free since 17 July 2021, when she was released on precautionary measures after 21 months of pretrial detention. Cases No. 488 of 2019 and 855 of 2020 have not been reported closed, and a search of English and Arabic sources found no public development in her case since her removal from the travel-ban list in December 2021. Lawyer Mahienour El-Masry and journalist Solafa Magdy were held in the same two cases.

## Background and work

Esraa Abdel Fattah is a journalist and one of the founding figures of the April 6 Youth Movement, the online-organising current that helped seed the 2011 Egyptian revolution. She earned the nickname "Facebook Girl" after her 2008 arrest for organising a general strike in support of textile workers in Mahalla al-Kubra, becoming one of the first Egyptians imprisoned over digital activism. In the years since, she has worked as a journalist with independent outlets and as a campaigner for political detainees.

## Arrest and detention

On 12 October 2019, plain-clothes officers stopped her in central Cairo and took her into custody. She was later added to State Security Case 488/2019, on terrorism and false-news charges connected to her journalism. In the first hours, at a National Security site, she was beaten, choked with her own top and hung by it, handcuffed and kept standing for hours to force her to unlock her phone, and threatened with sexual violence. She was then held at the Qanater women's prison. In August 2020, while still detained, she was questioned in a new case, 855/2020, on the charge of joining a terrorist group.

## Release

After 21 months in pre-trial detention, she was released on bail on 17 July 2021. The release was not the result of a verdict, the case against her was never closed, but a precautionary measure subject to onerous reporting conditions. She had been on a travel-ban list since 24 December 2014 in the foreign-funding investigation, Case 173/2011. On 5 December 2021 the investigating judge in that case removed her from the list and the charges against her in it were dropped.

## Current status as of 2026

Cases 488/2019 and 855/2020 were not reported closed after her release. No public information on her cases after December 2021 has been found.

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

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