

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

HODA ABDELWAHAB

هدى عبد الوهاب

At liberty **Egypt**

Hoda Abdelwahab, a lawyer leading an organisation that defends judicial independence across the Arab world, was barred from leaving Egypt from 2016 under a travel ban imposed without formal notice. In April 2026 her organisation reported that the authorities had decided to lift it.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-EG-2026-015

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Hoda Abdelwahab, a lawyer leading an organisation that defends judicial independence across the Arab world, was barred from leaving Egypt from 2016 under a travel ban imposed without formal notice. In April 2026 her organisation reported that the authorities had decided to lift it.

STATUS	**At liberty**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
CHARGES	**No formal charges filed**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Confirm publicly that no charge, restriction or proceeding remains against Hoda Abdelwahab in connection with this case.

02 Guarantee that Hoda Abdelwahab can continue peaceful human rights work without surveillance, summons or further reprisal.

03 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Hoda Abdelwahab and on any family members affected by the same order.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/hoda-abdelwahab/

02

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
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

December 2011

OFFICE RAID

ACIJLP offices raided

Police and public prosecution officials raided the offices of ACIJLP as part of Case 173/2011, the "foreign funding" case targeting Egyptian NGOs. Authorities seized computers and documents.

2016

CONTEXT

Case 173/2011 reopened

The authorities reopened the investigation in Case 173/2011, the foreign funding case against civil society organisations.

20 June 2016

TRAVEL BAN IMPOSED

Travel ban imposed

Abdelwahab was informed at Cairo International Airport that a travel ban had been imposed on her by judicial order as she was departing for Oslo to attend a conference on the death penalty. She was never formally notified of the order.

20 March 2024

CONTEXT

Case 173/2011 officially closed

After thirteen years of investigations, the Egyptian authorities officially announced the closure of Case 173/2011. The investigating judge confirmed that all investigations concerning the remaining civil society organisations had been completed.

9 July 2024

CONTEXT

Amnesty calls for her travel ban to be lifted

Amnesty International called on the Egyptian authorities to lift the travel bans on her and her colleague Nasser Amin.

December 2024

CONTEXT

Travel ban lifted on colleague Nasser Amin

Authorities lifted the travel ban on Nasser Amin, Abdelwahab's colleague who had also been subject to restrictions in connection with Case 173/2011. Abdelwahab remains the only defender still subject to the ban.

12 March 2026

CONTEXT

Rights groups say her travel ban is still in force

A joint statement by rights groups said the travel ban imposed in 2016 was still in force after ten years, and that her file was still pending before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, although Case 173/2011 was closed in 2024.

April 2026

TRAVEL BAN LIFTED

Travel ban reportedly lifted

Her organisation, ACIJLP, reported that Egyptian authorities had decided to remove her name from the travel-ban lists in force since 2016. No official document has been published.

04

THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Hoda Abdelwahab is an Egyptian lawyer and the Executive Director of the Arab Centre for Independence of Judiciary and the Legal Profession (ACIJLP), a regional organisation founded in 1997. ACIJLP works to promote judicial independence, the rule of law, and respect for human rights across Egypt and the Arab region. The organisation monitors judicial systems, advocates for legal reforms, and provides a platform for legal professionals and civil society actors working on justice and accountability.

Abdelwahab has dedicated her career to defending the independence of the judiciary and supporting lawyers and judges who face pressure or persecution for their work. Her role requires frequent travel to participate in international conferences, engage with regional human rights networks, and represent Egyptian civil society in global forums on justice and human rights.

Case 173/2011 and the 2011 Raid

In December 2011, Egyptian police and public prosecution officials raided the offices of ACIJLP as part of a broader crackdown on civil society organisations. The raid was part of Case 173/2011, commonly known as the "foreign funding" case, which targeted dozens of Egyptian NGOs accused of receiving foreign funds without authorisation. During the raid, authorities seized computers and documents from ACIJLP's offices.

ACIJLP was among the organisations investigated in the case, but it was never referred to trial. The case remained open for more than a decade, however, and the organisations named in it operated under prolonged legal uncertainty and the threat of prosecution. Case 173/2011 was reopened in 2016, years after the initial raids.

The Travel Ban

On 20 June 2016, Hoda Abdelwahab arrived at Cairo International Airport to board a flight to Oslo, where she was scheduled to participate in an international conference on the death penalty. Airport officials informed her that a travel ban had been imposed on her by judicial order. She was never formally notified of the order, never given a copy of the decision, and never informed of the legal grounds for the restriction.

Abdelwahab believes the ban is linked to the reopening of Case 173/2011. The travel ban remained in place continuously from 2016, preventing her from leaving Egypt for any reason. She has been unable to attend conferences, participate in regional human rights meetings, or carry out the international aspects of her work at ACIJLP.

Legal Proceedings and Attempted Appeals

Abdelwahab has submitted repeated requests to the Public Prosecution office and the criminal court seeking clarification of her legal status and the lifting of the travel ban. The authorities have provided only vague or unclear responses. As of March 2026, she had not been officially removed from the case file, which remained pending before the Supreme State Security Prosecution despite the official closure of Case 173/2011.

In March 2024, after thirteen years of investigations, the Egyptian authorities announced the official closure of Case 173/2011. The announcement came three days after the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between Egypt and the European Union. The investigating judge confirmed that all investigations concerning the remaining Egyptian civil society organisations in the case had been completed.

Despite the closure of the case, the travel ban on Hoda Abdelwahab was not lifted. In December 2024, the authorities lifted the travel ban on Nasser Amin, Abdelwahab's colleague who had also been subject to restrictions in connection with Case 173/2011. Abdelwahab remained the only human rights defender still subject to the ban imposed in 2016.

In April 2026, almost ten years after the ban was imposed, ACIJLP reported that the authorities had decided to remove her name from the travel-ban lists. No official document confirming the decision has been published, and she has received no formal decision resolving her legal status in Case 173/2011.

Current Status and Ongoing Restrictions

For almost ten years Hoda Abdelwahab lived under the travel ban without formal notification, clear legal reasoning, or access to effective legal remedies. Her freedom of movement stayed restricted despite the official closure of Case 173/2011 and the lack of any formal charges or trial proceedings against her or her organisation. She has received no reparations for the prolonged restrictions she faced.

Travel bans remain a tool used by Egyptian authorities to restrict the movement of human rights defenders, lawyers, NGO workers, and former detainees, often without due process or formal notification. The bans are typically imposed by judicial order in connection with national security cases and can remain in place for years without review or appeal.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Hoda Abdelwahab, lawyer and Executive Director of the Arab Centre for Independence of Judiciary and the Legal Profession (ACIJLP), working to promote judicial independence and the rule of law across Egypt and the Arab region in Egypt, whose prosecution has ended. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: Hoda Abdelwahab, a lawyer leading an organisation that defends judicial independence across the Arab world, was barred from leaving Egypt from 2016 under a travel ban imposed without formal notice. In April 2026 her organisation reported that the authorities had decided to lift it.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Confirm publicly that no charge, restriction or proceeding remains against Hoda Abdelwahab in connection with this case;
2. Guarantee that Hoda Abdelwahab can continue peaceful human rights work without surveillance, summons or further reprisal;
3. Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Hoda Abdelwahab and on any family members affected by the same order.

I will continue to follow this case until no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026