

Advocacy dossier

Hossam Bahgat

حسام بهجت

At liberty **Egypt**

Hossam Bahgat is a journalist and the executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, whose work has made him a recurring target of Egypt's security apparatus. He was fined in November 2021 over a tweet and has remained under State Security investigation on bail since January 2025.

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The case at a glance

Hossam Bahgat is a journalist and the executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, whose work has made him a recurring target of Egypt's security apparatus. He was fined in November 2021 over a tweet and has remained under State Security investigation on bail since January 2025.

Status	Arrested	Country
At liberty	**8 Nov 2015**	**Egypt**

Charges
Insulting a public institution
Spreading false news with malicious intent
Using a social media account to commit criminal offenses
Publishing false news that harms national interests (2015)
Disseminating information that disturbs public peace (2015)
Involvement with and financing a terrorist group (2025)
Publishing false news (2025)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Hossam Bahgat 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 Hossam Bahgat.

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

Criminalisation of solidarity International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5

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

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

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

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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How the case unfolded

8 November 2015

Arrest

Detained by military intelligence

Bahgat was detained after reporting to Military Intelligence over his Mada Masr article on a secret military trial of army officers. The military prosecution investigated him on charges of publishing false news that harms national interests.

10 November 2015

Release

Released from military intelligence custody

Bahgat was released after signing a pledge concerning his writing about the armed forces.

23 February 2016

Travel ban imposed

Travel ban imposed

Egyptian authorities prevented Bahgat from boarding a flight to Jordan to attend a UN conference. Officials informed him that the Public Prosecutor had imposed a travel ban in Case 173 of 2011. The ban stayed in place until March 2024.

17 September 2016

Asset freeze imposed

Asset freeze confirmed

The Cairo Criminal Court confirmed orders to freeze Bahgat's personal funds and family assets as part of a crackdown on human rights organizations accused of receiving foreign funding.

December 2020

Defender activity

Tweet posted criticizing election official

Bahgat posted a tweet on his personal Twitter account criticizing the president of the National Election Authority for alleged corruption during parliamentary elections.

16 June 2021

Hearing

Summoned for interrogation

Bahgat was summoned for interrogation by the Public Prosecutor in Rehab City. He was informed he faced three charges over the December 2020 tweet.

2 November 2021

Hearing

Appeared before Cairo Economic Court

Bahgat appeared before the Third Circuit for Misdemeanours of the Cairo Economic Court for Case No. 1592 of 2021. The court adjourned the hearing and scheduled a verdict for 29 November.

29 November 2021

Conviction

Convicted and fined EGP 10,000 over a tweet

The Third Circuit for Misdemeanours of the Cairo Economic Court convicted Bahgat in Case No. 1592 of 2021 of insulting the National Election Authority and spreading false news, and fined him EGP 10,000.

20 March 2024

Travel ban lifted

Travel ban lifted as Case 173 of 2011 is closed

On 20 March 2024 the investigating judge closed Case 173 of 2011, the foreign funding case against civil society groups, for insufficient evidence, and Bahgat's travel ban was lifted.

20 March 2024

Case closed or dropped

Case 173 of 2011 closed after 13 years

The investigating judge closed Case 173 of 2011 against Bahgat and other civil society figures for insufficient evidence.

13 November 2024

Asset freeze lifted

Asset freeze lifted by judicial order

A judicial order dated 13 November 2024 lifted the freeze on Bahgat's assets. In September 2024 a court had refused to unfreeze them, even though Case 173 had been closed.

15 January 2025

Summons

Summoned by State Security Prosecution

The Supreme State Security Prosecution summoned Bahgat for questioning over an EIPR statement on detention conditions.

19 January 2025

Conditional release

Released on EGP 20,000 bail after hours of questioning

The Supreme State Security Prosecution released Bahgat on bail of EGP 20,000 pending investigation.

19 January 2025

Charge filed

Charged with terrorism financing

After questioning him for more than three hours in Case 6 of 2025, the Supreme State Security Prosecution charged Bahgat with involvement with and financing a terrorist group and publishing false news.

14 February 2026

Call by others

Rights groups cite his case in statement on State Security summonses

In a joint statement, 18 human rights organisations condemned the growing use of State Security Prosecution summonses against rights defenders and political figures. They cited Bahgat's questioning in January 2025, after which he was released on EGP 20,000 bail, as part of a pattern of investigation followed by bail.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Hossam Bahgat remains free and continues to lead the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, but the Supreme State Security Prosecution investigation opened against him in January 2025 (Case 6 of 2025), on charges of involvement with and financing a terrorist group and publishing false news, has not been closed and he remains on EGP 20,000 bail. No new summons, referral to trial or travel restriction against him has been reported since.

Background and Work

Hossam Bahgat founded the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights in 2002 and led the organization as executive director until 2013. Under his direction, EIPR became one of the Arab region's most respected human rights documentation centers, publishing rigorous reports on torture, military trials of civilians, sectarian violence, and freedom of expression. He later returned to lead EIPR as its executive director, while also pursuing investigative journalism.

His reporting appears in Mada Masr, an independent Egyptian news outlet that has faced repeated attempts at censorship and blocking. Bahgat's investigative work focuses on abuses within Egypt's military and security institutions, subjects that carry significant risk. His stories rely on meticulous sourcing and have exposed patterns of unlawful detention, forced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing.

The 2015 Detention and Interrogation

From 8 to 10 November 2015, military intelligence officers detained Bahgat at their headquarters. He was released after signing a pledge concerning his writing about the armed forces. The detention followed publication of his reporting on Egypt's military. Authorities investigated him on charges of publishing false news that harms national interests and disseminating information that disturbs public peace. The charges were designed to punish investigative journalism that scrutinized military conduct.

Travel Ban and Asset Freeze

On 23 February 2016, Egyptian authorities prevented Bahgat from boarding a flight from Cairo International Airport to Jordan, where he was scheduled to participate in a United Nations conference on justice in the Arab world. Officials informed him that the Public Prosecutor had imposed a travel ban. The ban stayed in place until March 2024.

On 17 September 2016, the Cairo Criminal Court confirmed orders to freeze Bahgat's personal funds and family assets. The freeze was imposed as part of a broader crackdown on human rights organizations accused of illegally receiving foreign funding, a charge used systematically to strangle independent civil society. On 20 March 2024 the investigating judge closed Case 173 of 2011 and the travel ban was lifted. A court refused to unfreeze his assets in September 2024, and the freeze was finally lifted by a judicial order dated 13 November 2024.

The Twitter Prosecution

In December 2020, Bahgat posted a tweet on his personal Twitter account criticizing Lashin Ibrahim,

then president of the National Election Authority, for alleged corruption during that year's parliamentary elections. The acting president of the Authority filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor.

On 16 June 2021, Bahgat was summoned for interrogation by the Public Prosecutor in Rehab City. He was informed that he faced three charges: insulting a public institution, spreading false news with malicious intent, and using a social media account to commit those crimes. The charges carry a combined penalty of up to three years in prison and a fine of up to 300,000 Egyptian pounds.

On 2 November 2021, Bahgat appeared before the Third Circuit for Misdemeanours of the Cairo Economic Court for Case No. 1592 of 2021. The court adjourned the hearing to 29 November 2021, when it convicted him and fined him EGP 10,000.

Pattern of Judicial Harassment

The prosecution over a single tweet is part of a sustained campaign of judicial harassment. Bahgat has been subjected to military interrogation, criminal investigation, asset freezes, and travel bans, all tied to his documentation of human rights violations and his journalism. The charges are tools of control, designed to deter reporting and exhaust the defender through repeated legal proceedings. In January 2025 the State Security Prosecution opened a new investigation against him on terrorism charges and released him on bail.

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

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