

Advocacy dossier

Hossameldin Ali

حسام الدين علي

At liberty **Egypt**

President of the Egyptian Democratic Academy, which promotes democracy and political participation, Hossameldin Ali faced travel bans, asset freezes, and questioning in the 2011 foreign funding case before charges were dropped in August 2021.

01
The case at a glance

President of the Egyptian Democratic Academy, which promotes democracy and political participation, Hossameldin Ali faced travel bans, asset freezes, and questioning in the 2011 foreign funding case before charges were dropped in August 2021.

Status **At liberty**	Country **Egypt**
Sentence Case dropped: the investigative judge ended the Case 173 investigation against him on 30 August 2021 and announced that travel bans and asset freezes were removed. Case 173 was closed on 20 March 2024.	
Charges Unlawfully receiving foreign funding in violation of Egypt's NGO laws Harming national security Running a branch of an international organisation without a licence	

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Hossameldin Ali 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 Hossameldin Ali.

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

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

2011

Investigation opened

Foreign funding investigation opened

Egyptian authorities opened case 173 of 2011, the so-called foreign funding investigation targeting civil-society organisations, including the Egyptian Democratic Academy.

December 2014

Travel ban imposed

First travel ban imposed

The Public Prosecutor banned Hossameldin Ali from travel pending the case 173 investigation.

27 February 2016

Travel ban imposed

Travel ban enforced at airport

Ali was prevented from traveling to the United States at Cairo International Airport and subjected to a three-hour telephone interrogation by a National Security officer.

20 May 2018

Release on bail ordered

Questioned and released on bail

The investigative judge in Case 173 questioned him and ordered his release on bail of 20,000 Egyptian pounds.

30 August 2021

Case update

Case dropped, charges dismissed

The investigative judge authorised by the Cairo Court of Appeal decided there were no grounds to proceed in case 173 against Ali, his organisation and three co-defendants.

30 August 2021

Travel ban lifted

Judge's decision lifts travel ban and asset freeze

In the press release announcing the end of the investigation against Hossameldin Ali and the other defenders in Case 173 of 2011, the investigative judge said the travel bans and asset freezes against them and their organisations were removed. Amnesty International noted that it was unclear whether the Ministry of Interior had taken the names off its travel ban list.

20 March 2024

Case closed or dropped

Authorities announce closure of the foreign funding case

The authorities announced the closure of Case 173 of 2011 after 13 years of investigation. Amnesty International reported that travel bans on 29 of at least 31 defenders and NGO staff affected by the case had been lifted.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked against current sources. Hossameldin Ali is free: the investigative judge dropped Case 173 against him on 30 August 2021 and announced that travel bans and asset freezes were removed, and the authorities announced the closure of the whole case on 20 March 2024. Magdy Abdel Hamid, Negad El Borai and Azza Soliman were cleared in the same decision, and Esraa Abdel Fattah, also banned from travel in the case, was named by Amnesty International among those it covered.

Background and Work

Hossameldin Ali founded and led the Egyptian Democratic Academy, a non-profit organisation established by a group of activists to promote democracy, human rights, and political participation in Egypt. The Academy provided training, facilitated civic engagement, and worked to strengthen democratic culture in a political environment that grew increasingly hostile to independent civil society after 2011.

Ali worked alongside a board of directors that included other prominent defenders. The Academy operated in the same ecosystem as organisations led by Azza Soliman, Negad El Borai, and Magdy Abdel Hamid, all of whom would later be co-defendants in the same case.

The Foreign Funding Investigation

In 2011, Egyptian authorities opened case 173, an investigation targeting civil-society organisations that received foreign funding. The case became a tool for criminalising independent advocacy groups, accusing them of breaching restrictive laws governing non-governmental organisations. Hossameldin Ali and the Egyptian Democratic Academy were swept into the investigation.

In December 2014, authorities imposed a travel ban on Ali in connection with the ongoing investigation. The ban was ordered by the Public Prosecutor and later upheld by a criminal court. It was one of many such bans imposed on civil-society leaders during this period.

Travel Ban and Interrogation

On 27 February 2016, Ali arrived at Cairo International Airport to fly to the United States. He had been invited to attend an international conference on combating corruption through legislation, organised by the U.S. State Department. Airport authorities informed him that he remained under a travel ban and would not be permitted to board.

A National Security officer then interrogated him by telephone for three hours. The officer questioned him about the Egyptian Democratic Academy's funding sources, its activities, his role on the board, the details and purpose of his U.S. trip, and the identities of people he intended to meet. The interrogation was conducted without legal counsel present and without any formal charge or hearing.

The travel ban extended to other Academy members. Ahmed Ghonim and Bassem Samir, both members of the Academy, were also barred from leaving Egypt. The pattern reflected a broader campaign against civil-society organisations, including bans imposed on defenders such as Esraa

Abdel Fattah.

Questioning and Release on Bail

On 20 May 2018, the investigative judge handling case 173 questioned Hossameldin Ali and ordered his release on bail of 20,000 Egyptian pounds the same day.

Case Dropped

On 30 August 2021, the investigative judge authorised by the Cairo Court of Appeal to examine case 173 decided to drop the case against Hossameldin Ali, his organisation, and three co-defendants: Azza Soliman, Negad El Borai, and Magdy Abdel Hamid. The decision closed the case against them without a trial.

The investigative judge announced that the travel bans and asset freezes against the defenders and their organisations were removed. Front Line Defenders noted that further legal steps were needed to take names off the travel ban lists and unfreeze assets, and Amnesty International said it was unclear whether the Ministry of Interior had removed their names. On 20 March 2024 the authorities announced the closure of Case 173.

Impact and Context

Hossameldin Ali's case exemplifies the use of prolonged investigations, asset freezes, and travel bans to restrict civil-society work in Egypt. For years before the case was dropped, these measures constrained his freedom of movement and the Academy's operations. The foreign funding case targeted more than 40 organisations and numerous individuals, most of whom faced years of uncertainty, frozen assets, and curtailed movement before charges were dropped or dismissed.

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

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement is a non-governmental organisation documenting the situation of human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa. This file is based on the public record of the case in the defenders archive.Status as recorded on 2018-05-20. To report an error: archive@humena.org