

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

MOHAMED EL-BAQER

محمد الباقر

At liberty **Egypt**

Lawyer and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which provides legal aid to political detainees in Egypt. Detained for nearly four years and placed on a terrorism list before his 2023 pardon.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-021

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Lawyer and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which provides legal aid to political detainees in Egypt. Detained for nearly four years and placed on a terrorism list before his 2023 pardon.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**29 Sep 2019**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
SENTENCE	**Four years in prison, sentenced by emergency state security court.**
CHARGES	**Joining a terrorist organisation (Cases 1356/2019 and 855/2020, pre-trial)** **Spreading false news (convicted in Case 1228/2021)** **Misuse of social media (Cases 1356/2019 and 855/2020, pre-trial)**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Mohamed El-Baqer 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 Mohamed El-Baqer.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/mohamed-el-baqer/

02

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Asset freeze	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 13
Denial of legal counsel	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)
Inhumane detention conditions	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Prolonged pretrial detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)
Travel ban	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

29 September 2019

ARREST

Arrested at State Security Prosecution

El-Baqer was arrested inside the State Security Prosecution building in Cairo while there to represent detained activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah. His whereabouts were unknown for the first 24 hours.

30 September 2019

HEARING

Ordered into 15-day pre-trial detention

The Supreme Public Prosecution ordered his placement in 15-day pre-trial detention without charge specification.

October 2019

TRANSFER BETWEEN PLACES OF DETENTION

Transferred to Tora Prison Al-Aqrab wing

El-Baqer was moved to Al-Aqrab, a maximum security facility inside Tora Prison complex, known for isolation cells and harsh conditions.

9 October 2019

HEARING

Pre-trial detention renewed

The Supreme Public Prosecution in Cairo renewed his pre-trial detention for an additional period.

23 October 2019

HEARING

Detention extended for 15 days

The Supreme Public Prosecution renewed his preventive detention for another 15 days.

18 February 2020

HEARING

Court orders release

The Criminal Court of Tora ordered El-Baqer's release. The Public Prosecution immediately appealed the decision.

20 February 2020

HEARING

Release order reversed on appeal

The Criminal Court of Tora accepted the prosecution's appeal and renewed his detention for 45 days without providing justification.

March 2020

ACCESS TO COUNSEL DENIED

Lawyers unable to visit him since March 2020

His legal team has been unable to visit him in prison since COVID-19 restrictions were announced in March 2020.

5 May 2020

HEARING

Detention renewed for 45 days

The Criminal Court of Cairo renewed the detention of El-Baqer and three other human rights defenders for an additional 45 days.

30 August 2020

INTERROGATION

Brought in for questioning

on August 30, 2020, El-Baqer was brought in for questioning

30 August 2020

CASE ROTATION (TADWIR)

Added to Case 855/2020 on nearly identical charges

added to Case No. 855/2020 on nearly identical charges

23 November 2020

TERRORIST LIST DESIGNATION

Added to terrorism list for five years

The Criminal Court of Cairo ordered that El-Baqer be placed on Egypt's official terrorism list for five years, triggering automatic asset freezes and travel bans.

23 November 2020

TRAVEL BAN IMPOSED

Travel ban and passport withdrawal under terrorism listing

The terrorism listing bans him from travel and withdraws his passport, freezes his funds and bars him from public and civil society activity. The ban continued when the listing was renewed in November 2025.

2021

REFERRAL TO TRIAL

Referred to trial in Case 1228 of 2021

The three were referred to criminal trial in Case No. 1228 of 2021 (Emergency State Security Misdemeanours).

18 October 2021

HEARING

First hearing before the emergency court

The first hearing in the case was held on 18 October 2021 before the Emergency State Security Misdemeanours Court.

8 November 2021

HEARING

Hearing before the emergency court

El-Baqer was presented before the New Cairo Emergency State Security Misdemeanour Court for Case No. 1228/2021. The verdict was postponed and the defence was not permitted to make full submissions.

18 November 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Court of Cassation rejects appeal against his terrorist listing

On November 18, 2021, the Court of Cassation rejected the appeal presented by his lawyers against the decision to include him in the “terrorist list”.

20 December 2021

CONVICTION

Sentenced to four years in prison

The New Cairo Emergency State Security Misdemeanour Court sentenced El-Baqer to four years in prison.

19 July 2023

PARDON

Presidential pardon issued

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi pardoned the rest of his sentence, together with researcher Patrick George Zaki. The pardon did not close his other cases or the terrorism listing.

20 July 2023

RELEASE

Released after nearly four years

El-Baqer was released from prison following the presidential pardon, after nearly four years in detention.

18 November 2025

TERRORIST LIST DESIGNATION

Terrorism designation renewed

The First Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court renewed his placement on Egypt's terrorism watchlist for a second five-year period.

January 2026

STATEMENT BY UN EXPERTS

UN experts urge Egypt to lift restrictions on released defenders

UN experts publicly urged Egypt to lift restrictions on released human rights defenders, citing the renewal of his terrorism listing.

13 June 2026

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Court of Cassation rejects appeal against renewed terrorism listing

The Court of Cassation rejected his appeal against the November 2025 renewal of his terrorism listing in Case 1781/2019, keeping him on the list.

04

THE FULL STORY

Update, 13 May 2026: El-Baqer was released by presidential pardon on 20 July 2023 after almost four years of detention. However, on 18 November 2025 the Cairo Criminal Court renewed his placement on Egypt's terrorism watchlist for another five years, continuing a pattern of post-release restrictions. On 13 June 2026 the Court of Cassation rejected his appeal against the renewal, so he remains banned from travel and unable to use his funds.

Background and Work

Mohamed El-Baqer is a lawyer who founded and directed the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, an independent legal aid organisation serving political detainees and prisoners of conscience in Egypt. The centre documented rights violations, provided legal representation in politically sensitive cases, and advocated for civil and political freedoms during a period of intensifying repression.

His work placed him at the centre of Egypt's shrinking space for dissent. The Adalah Center took on cases that few others would touch, representing defendants prosecuted under emergency laws, anti-terrorism statutes, and protest bans. El-Baqer's clients included journalists, activists, and other human rights defenders targeted by the state.

The Arrest

El-Baqer was arrested on 29 September 2019 inside the State Security Prosecution building in Cairo, where he had gone to represent detained activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah. His arrest came amid a broader crackdown triggered by rare public protests demanding President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's resignation. In the days surrounding the demonstrations, security forces detained hundreds of people, including lawyers, journalists, and civil society members.

For the first 24 hours following his arrest, his whereabouts were unknown. On 30 September, the Supreme Public Prosecution ordered his placement in 15-day pre-trial detention. He was transferred to Tora Prison's Al-Aqrab wing on 1 October, a maximum security facility notorious for prolonged isolation and inhumane conditions.

Prolonged Pre-Trial Detention and Judicial Harassment

El-Baqer's detention was renewed repeatedly without trial. His case file grew to include charges of joining a terrorist organisation, spreading false news, and misusing social media. Prosecutors offered no specific evidence tying him to any criminal act; his legal work itself appeared to be the basis for the charges.

On 18 February 2020, the Criminal Court of Tora ordered his release. Within hours, the Public Prosecution appealed. Two days later, on 20 February, the court reversed its own decision and renewed his detention for another 45 days without explanation. The cycle of detention renewals continued

through 2020 and into 2021.

In November 2020, while still in pre-trial detention, El-Baqer was added to Egypt's official terrorism list for five years. The designation carried automatic asset freezes and a travel ban, and it required no conviction or judicial hearing. The listing compounded the legal restrictions he faced and signalled the state's intent to marginalise him even beyond any eventual sentence.

Trial and Sentence

El-Baqer was finally brought before the New Cairo Emergency State Security Misdemeanour Court in November 2021, more than two years after his arrest. Emergency courts operate outside ordinary criminal procedure, offer limited appeal rights, and frequently convict on thin evidence. The defence was not permitted to make full oral submissions.

On 20 December 2021, the court sentenced El-Baqer to four years in prison. He was tried alongside activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah, who received five years, and blogger Mohamed Ibrahim, known as Oxygen, who received four years. The conviction was for spreading false news. Both remained in detention at Tora throughout the proceedings.

Release

On 19 July 2023, President El-Sisi issued a pardon covering El-Baqer and researcher Patrick George Zaki, among others. El-Baqer was released the following day, after spending nearly four years in detention. His terrorism-list designation and its associated restrictions remained in effect.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand the immediate lifting of the arbitrary travel ban imposed on Mohamed El-Baqer, lawyer; director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, providing legal aid to political detainees and advancing civil and political rights in Egypt.

In brief: Lawyer and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which provides legal aid to political detainees in Egypt. Detained for nearly four years and placed on a terrorism list before his 2023 pardon.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Mohamed El-Baqer and on any family members affected by the same order;
2. Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work;
3. Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement;
4. Immediately unfreeze the personal and organisational accounts of Mohamed El-Baqer.

I will continue to monitor this case until Mohamed El-Baqer's freedom of movement is restored.

Respectfully,

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