

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

NEGAD EL BORAI

نجاد البرعي

At liberty **Egypt**

Lawyer and founder of the United Group, specialising in individual freedoms and property law. Charged in Egypt's foreign-funding case; subjected to five interrogations, travel ban, and asset freeze before charges were dropped in August 2021.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-030

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Lawyer and founder of the United Group, specialising in individual freedoms and property law. Charged in Egypt's foreign-funding case; subjected to five interrogations, travel ban, and asset freeze before charges were dropped in August 2021.

STATUS	**At liberty**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
SENTENCE	**Charges dropped on 30 August 2021.**
CHARGES	**Receiving illegal foreign funding** **Operating without legal permission**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Confirm publicly that no charge, restriction or proceeding remains against Negad El Borai in connection with this case.

02 Guarantee that Negad El Borai can continue peaceful human rights work without surveillance, summons or further reprisal.

03 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Negad El Borai and on any family members affected by the same order.

04 Immediately unfreeze the personal and organisational accounts of Negad El Borai.

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

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
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

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2014

DEFENDER ACTIVITY

Resignation from National Council

El Borai resigned from Egypt's National Council for Human Rights in protest over the body's inconsistent response to documented human rights abuses.

21 May 2015

INTERROGATION

First interrogation

El Borai was interrogated by an investigative judge at North Giza Court regarding his work drafting anti-torture legislation.

3 March 2016

CHARGE FILED

Charged in foreign-funding case

El Borai was summoned for questioning and formally charged with receiving illegal foreign funding and working without legal permission.

17 May 2016

INTERROGATION

Fifth round of interrogation

Egyptian authorities called El Borai for a fifth interrogation session, again focusing on the anti-torture law draft.

26 January 2017

TRAVEL BAN IMPOSED

Travel ban imposed

Airport security prevented El Borai from boarding his flight to Jordan after his name appeared on a prosecutor-compiled travel-ban list.

30 August 2021

CASE UPDATE

Charges dropped

The investigative judge authorised by the Cairo Court of Appeal dropped all charges against El Borai and three co-defendants in the foreign-funding case.

20 March 2024

CONTEXT

Foreign-funding case closed

The authorities announced the closure of Case No. 173 of 2011, the foreign-funding case, and said that travel bans had been lifted for 29 of the 31 people still affected.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Negad El Borai is a prominent figure in Egypt's human rights and legal-reform community. A lawyer by training, he served as head of the legal unit at United Group, a law firm focused on individual freedoms, property rights, and rule-of-law advocacy. He founded and led the Group for Democratic Development and served as secretary general of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights, one of the country's oldest independent human rights bodies.

El Borai also worked as a columnist for Al-Shorouk, a widely circulated independent newspaper, where he wrote on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. He was appointed to Egypt's National Council for Human Rights, a state-affiliated body meant to advise on rights policy, but resigned in January 2014, citing the council's failure to respond consistently to documented abuses during a period of escalating repression.

He was involved in drafting model legislation to criminalise torture, drawing on years of documentation work with survivors and civil society partners. That draft became a focal point of state scrutiny.

The Foreign-Funding Case and Repeated Interrogations

In 2011 Egyptian authorities opened Case No. 173, an investigation targeting civil society organisations on allegations of receiving unauthorised foreign funding and operating without proper registration. The case remained dormant for several years before resurfacing in 2015 as part of a broader crackdown on independent organisations and their leaders.

El Borai was summoned for interrogation on 21 May 2015 by an investigative judge at North Giza Court. The questioning centred on his involvement in drafting anti-torture legislation. He was called in again on 3 March 2016 and charged with receiving illegal foreign funding and working without legal permission. Two further rounds of interrogation followed, including a fifth summons on 17 May 2016, again focused on the anti-torture draft law.

The repeated interrogations formed part of a pattern affecting more than thirty-seven organisations and dozens of defenders, many of whom faced overlapping charges and parallel restrictions.

Travel Ban and Asset Freeze

On 26 January 2017 El Borai arrived at Cairo International Airport to board a flight to Jordan. Airport security prevented him from travelling after his name appeared on a list compiled by the investigating magistrate and the prosecutor general in connection with the foreign-funding case. The travel ban had been imposed without prior notice.

The ban was accompanied by an asset freeze affecting both his personal accounts and the institutional

assets of United Group.

Travel bans became one of the most common tools of restriction during this period, applied to more than a dozen defenders linked to the foreign-funding case, including Azza Soliman, Mozn Hassan, Hossam Eldin Ali, and others.

Case Closure and Lingering Restrictions

On 30 August 2021 the investigative judge authorised by the Cairo Court of Appeal to oversee Case No. 173 issued a decision dropping the charges against El Borai and three co-defendants: Azza Soliman, Magdi Abdel Hameed, and Hossam Eldin Ali. The decision also dropped charges against their respective organisations.

No trial took place; the charges were dropped. The decision also ordered the travel bans and asset freezes lifted, but further legal steps were needed to remove their names from official restriction lists and unfreeze their accounts. In March 2024 the authorities announced the closure of Case No. 173.

Context and Pattern

El Borai's case illustrates the use of prolonged investigation, asset control, and mobility restriction as forms of pressure that operate independently of judicial outcomes. The foreign-funding investigation served as the legal framework for measures that effectively paralysed civil society work, even in cases where no conviction was ever secured.

His resignation from the National Council for Human Rights in 2014 and his continued legal advocacy work during the period of investigation marked him as a defender unwilling to accommodate state narratives. The focus on the anti-torture draft law during interrogations underscored the state's sensitivity to documentation and legislative reform efforts that threatened to formalise accountability mechanisms.

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SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Negad El Borai, lawyer and head of the legal unit at United Group; columnist; former president of Group for Democratic Development and former secretary general of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights 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: Lawyer and founder of the United Group, specialising in individual freedoms and property law. Charged in Egypt's foreign-funding case; subjected to five interrogations, travel ban, and asset freeze before charges were dropped in August 2021.

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

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

Respectfully,

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