

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

RASHA AZAB

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At liberty **Egypt**

Journalist and screenwriter tried for expressing solidarity with survivors of sexual assault. Faced criminal prosecution after film director claimed defamation and financial damage. Acquitted in April 2022, she was convicted on appeal in August 2022 and fined EGP 10,000. She was arrested and bailed in April 2024, and in October 2026 the State Security Prosecution questioned her and released her on bail.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-018

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Journalist and screenwriter tried for expressing solidarity with survivors of sexual assault. Faced criminal prosecution after film director claimed defamation and financial damage. Acquitted in April 2022, she was convicted on appeal in August 2022 and fined EGP 10,000. She was arrested and bailed in April 2024, and in October 2026 the State Security Prosecution questioned her and released her on bail.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**23 Apr 2024**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
SENTENCE	**Acquitted at first instance on 23 April 2022; on 21 August 2022 the economic appeals court convicted her of insult and defamation and fined her EGP 10,000.**
CHARGES	**Slander** **Defamation** **Financial damage**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Drop any charges that remain on record against Rasha Azab in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Rasha Azab faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Rasha Azab can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

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

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Defamation and smear campaign	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Press freedom violation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14
Unlawful surveillance	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

19 June 2011

INTERROGATION

Questioned by the military prosecution over an article

The military prosecution questioned her, together with Al-Fagr editor Adel Hammouda, over her article on a meeting between the ruling military council and campaigners against military trials, on a charge of publishing false information. Both were released without bail the same day pending investigation.

13 October 2015

INTERROGATION

Questioned with five other activists on protest charges

On 13 October 2015, the Cairo Prosecutor interrogated her and five other activists for five hours on charges including organising an illegal protest, inciting people to protest, attacking police officers, blocking traffic, chanting slogans against the army and police, and belonging to an illegal organisation.

1 December 2020

DEFENDER ACTIVITY

Sexual assault allegations published

Six women published anonymous testimonies on Daftar Hekayat alleging sexual assault by film director Islam Azazi. Rasha Azab expressed solidarity with the survivors on Twitter.

2021

COMPLAINT FILED

Civil suit filed

Film director Islam Azazi filed a civil suit against Rasha Azab accusing her of slander and defamation in connection with her expression of solidarity with survivors.

1 February 2021

CASE UPDATE

Civil suit dismissed

The civil suit brought by Islam Azazi was closed and dismissed because the allegations against Rasha Azab were unsubstantiated.

1 March 2021

INVESTIGATION OPENED

Case reopened

Islam Azazi filed a grievance of financial damage, claiming his involvement with the Cairo International Film Festival was harmed. The case against Rasha Azab was reopened.

20 January 2022

INVESTIGATION OPENED

Case transferred to prosecution

The case file was transferred to the Financial and Administrative Affairs Prosecution.

25 January 2022

REFERRAL TO TRIAL

Trial order issued

The Economic Court issued a decision to bring Rasha Azab to trial on charges of slander, defamation, and financial damage.

26 February 2022

HEARING

First hearing

Rasha Azab appeared before the Public Prosecution in Al-Basatin, Cairo, on charges carrying up to two years in prison and fines of up to 500,000 Egyptian pounds.

12 March 2022

HEARING

Adjourned hearing

The case was adjourned from 26 February to 12 March 2022 for further proceedings.

23 April 2022

ACQUITTAL

Acquittal

The Economic Court in Cairo acquitted Rasha Azab and dismissed all charges. The Court rejected the civil suit and ordered the plaintiff to bear the financial costs.

21 August 2022

CONVICTION

Acquittal overturned on appeal; fined EGP 10,000

An economic appeals court overturned her April 2022 acquittal, convicted her of insult and defamation, and fined her EGP 10,000.

October 2023

CONTEXT

Threatened with arrest by security agencies

From October 2023 she received threats of arrest from several security agencies.

23 April 2024

ARREST

Arrested at a protest outside UN Women in Cairo

She was among at least 16 people arrested at a protest outside the UN Women office in Cairo in solidarity with women in Gaza and Sudan. The Supreme State Security Prosecution charged them in Case 1567 of 2024 with joining a group established in violation of the law.

24 April 2024

CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Released on bail the next day

The next day, the Supreme State Security Prosecution released her on bail of EGP 10,000.

8 October 2024

CONTEXT

Followed by men in civilian clothes

In October and November 2024 she was followed by men in civilian clothes on several occasions, and her car was stolen on 5 November 2024. The Journalists Syndicate filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor.

5 October 2026

INTERROGATION

Questioned by the Supreme State Security Prosecution

The Supreme State Security Prosecution questioned her in Case 8025 of 2026 on charges of promoting terrorist acts, over a post on X of 23 September 2026 criticising the Interior Ministry.

5 October 2026

CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Released on bail

After the questioning, she was released on EGP 10,000 bail.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Rasha Azab is a journalist, screenwriter, and advocate for freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and women's rights in Egypt. She co-founded the Kefaya movement in the mid-2000s, a grassroots coalition that challenged the authoritarianism of President Hosni Mubarak. Following the 2011 Arab Spring, she helped establish the No Military Trials for Civilians Movement, which campaigned against the military prosecution of civilians during the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

In June 2011, the military prosecution questioned her over an article on a meeting between the ruling military council and campaigners against military trials, on a charge of publishing false information, and released her without bail pending investigation. Her work as a journalist and screenwriter has consistently focused on human rights abuses, gender-based violence, and the erosion of civil liberties in Egypt.

The Case: Solidarity with Survivors of Sexual Assault

In December 2020, six women published anonymous testimonies on the website Daftar Hekayat alleging sexual assault by Egyptian film director Islam Azazi. The platform provides a space for survivors to share their experiences without revealing their identities. Rasha Azab expressed support for the survivors on her personal Twitter account. She did not make allegations herself; she voiced solidarity with the women who came forward.

In January 2021, Islam Azazi filed a civil suit against Rasha accusing her of slander and defamation. The case was closed and dismissed in February 2021 because the allegations against her were deemed unsubstantiated. The following month, the director filed a grievance of financial damage, claiming that Rasha's statements had harmed his involvement with the Cairo International Film Festival. The case was reopened in March 2021. The director not only attended the festival but had his film screened there twice.

The case file was transferred to the Financial and Administrative Affairs Prosecution on 20 January 2022. Five days later, the Economic Court ordered Rasha to stand trial. Women's rights organizations raised concerns that the exceptional use of defamation and financial damage charges in a case involving sexual assault allegations would deter survivors and their supporters from speaking out.

Legal Proceedings and Acquittal

On 26 February 2022, Rasha appeared before the Public Prosecution in Al-Basatin, Cairo, on charges of slander, defamation, and financial damage. The prosecution relied on Penal Code No. 58 of 1937 and Communications Regulatory Law No. 10 of 2003. If convicted, she faced up to two years in prison and fines ranging from 20,000 to 500,000 Egyptian pounds. The hearing was adjourned until 12 March 2022.

On 23 April 2022, the Economic Court in Cairo acquitted Rasha Azab and dismissed all charges. The Court also rejected the civil suit brought by Islam Azazi and ordered him to bear the financial costs of the case. No credible investigation into the sexual assault allegations against Azazi was conducted by Egyptian authorities.

The acquittal did not stand. On 21 August 2022, an economic appeals court overturned it, convicted Rasha of insult and defamation, and fined her EGP 10,000.

Later Cases

On 23 April 2024, Rasha was among at least sixteen people arrested at a protest in solidarity with women in Gaza and Sudan. The Supreme State Security Prosecution charged them in Case 1567 of 2024 and released all of them on bail the next day. On 5 October 2026, the Supreme State Security Prosecution questioned her in Case 8025 of 2026 over a social media post criticising the Interior Ministry, on charges of promoting terrorist acts, and released her on EGP 10,000 bail.

Prior Harassment

Rasha has faced judicial harassment for her human rights work before. On 13 October 2015, the Cairo Prosecutor interrogated her and five other activists for five hours on charges including organising an illegal protest, inciting people to protest, attacking police officers, blocking traffic, chanting slogans against the army and police, and belonging to an illegal organisation. The charges related to their involvement with the 6th of April Movement and the Revolutionary Socialists Movement. All six were released on bail the same day, and the charges were subsequently dropped.

Context and Impact

The prosecution of Rasha Azab occurred in an environment where Egyptian authorities routinely deploy defamation and cybercrime laws to silence dissent and punish speech about gender-based violence. The case demonstrated the risks faced by those who publicly support survivors of sexual assault in Egypt. The use of financial damage claims to reopen a previously dismissed case raised serious due process concerns. Her first-instance acquittal was overturned on appeal, and the broader chilling effect on women's rights advocacy persists.

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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 Rasha Azab, journalist and screenwriter; founder of the Kefaya movement and the No Military Trials for Civilians Movement; advocate for freedom of expression and women's rights in Egypt, who has been released. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: Journalist and screenwriter tried for expressing solidarity with survivors of sexual assault. Faced criminal prosecution after film director claimed defamation and financial damage. Acquitted in April 2022, she was convicted on appeal in August 2022 and fined EGP 10,000. She was arrested and bailed in April 2024, and in October 2026 the State Security Prosecution questioned her and released her on bail.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Drop any charges that remain on record against Rasha Azab in connection with peaceful human rights work;
2. Confirm publicly that Rasha Azab faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case;
3. Guarantee that Rasha Azab can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal;
4. Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

I will continue to follow this case until the record against Rasha Azab is cleared and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

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