

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

SOLAFA MAGDY

سلافة مجدي

At liberty **Egypt**

Egyptian journalist and 2020 IWMF Courage in Journalism Award winner, detained in November 2019 on terrorism and false news charges and released in April 2021. She left Egypt in September 2021 and lives in exile in France. She was denied medical care for serious health problems while held in pretrial detention.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-049

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Egyptian journalist and 2020 IWMF Courage in Journalism Award winner, detained in November 2019 on terrorism and false news charges and released in April 2021. She left Egypt in September 2021 and lives in exile in France. She was denied medical care for serious health problems while held in pretrial detention.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**26 Nov 2019**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
CHARGES	**Joining a terrorist group** **Spreading false news** **Misuse of social media**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Immediately end all transnational targeting of Solafa Magdy, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.

02 Withdraw any in-absentia convictions or politically motivated charges tied to peaceful human rights work.

03 Comply with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and OHCHR guidance on transnational repression.

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

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Denial of medical care	UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27
Inhumane detention conditions	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)
Press freedom violation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19
Prolonged pretrial detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Torture	Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

26 November 2019

ARREST

Arrested with husband and friend

Plainclothes officers arrested Solafa Magdy, her husband, journalist Hossam el-Sayyad, and their friend Mohamed Salah as they left a café in Dokki, Cairo.

27 November 2019

CHARGE FILED

Charged in state security case 488/2019

The Supreme State Security Prosecution added her to case 488/2019 and charged her with joining a terrorist group and spreading false news. It ordered 15 days of detention, renewed repeatedly. She was held in Al-Qanater women's prison.

2020

AWARD OR RECOGNITION

IWMF Courage in Journalism Award

Named a winner of the International Women's Media Foundation's 2020 Courage in Journalism Award while she was imprisoned.

30 August 2020

CHARGE FILED

Questioned in a second case, 855/2020

While still detained, she was questioned by the Supreme State Security Prosecution in a new case, 855/2020, on charges of joining a terrorist group, spreading false news and misuse of social media.

December 2020

AWARD OR RECOGNITION

Honorary citizenship of Paris

The City of Paris awarded Solafa honorary citizenship in recognition of her work and her arbitrary detention.

30 January 2021

CALL BY OTHERS

Lawyers document abuses

Solafa's lawyers submitted a formal report to Egyptian authorities documenting abuses including nighttime blindfolded interrogations, threats against her family, and denial of medical care.

18 February 2021

CALL BY OTHERS

International appeal to U.S. government

Eight international human rights organizations submitted an urgent letter to the U.S. State Department calling for direct intervention to secure Solafa's immediate release, citing her urgent medical needs and arbitrary detention.

14 April 2021

RELEASE

Released with husband Hossam

Released alongside her husband, journalist Hossam el-Sayyad, after about 17 months in pretrial detention. CPJ dates the release to 13 April.

26 September 2021

DEPARTURE INTO EXILE

Leaves Egypt for exile in France

Solafa Magdy left Egypt for security and political reasons and settled in France.

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THE FULL STORY

Update, 13 May 2026: Magdy was released on 14 April 2021 together with her husband, journalist Hossam el-Sayyad, after over a year in pretrial detention. She was awarded the IWMF Courage in Journalism Award in 2020 while she was imprisoned over her journalism.

Background and Work

Solafa Magdy worked as a journalist in Egypt, reporting on human rights violations and defending press freedom in an environment increasingly hostile to independent journalism. Her reporting drew international recognition, including the International Women's Media Foundation's Courage in Journalism Award in 2020. In December 2020, the City of Paris awarded her honorary citizenship in recognition of her work and her detention.

Solafa is married to fellow journalist Hossam el-Sayyad. They have a young son. Both Solafa and Hossam were active in documenting abuses and continuing journalistic work despite mounting pressures on the press in Egypt.

The Arrest

On 26 November 2019, Egyptian security forces arrested Solafa, her husband Hossam el-Sayyad, and their friend Mohamed Salah. Authorities accused the three of terrorism-related offenses and spreading false news under Egypt's expansive anti-terrorism and cybercrime legislation. All three deny the charges, which appear to be politically motivated responses to their journalistic and advocacy work.

After their arrest, Solafa, Hossam, and Mohamed were held in pretrial detention without trial. Egyptian prosecutors used the country's renewable pretrial detention system to keep them behind bars indefinitely, a practice that has been widely condemned as a tool of indefinite imprisonment without judicial process.

Detention Conditions and Health

Solafa's health deteriorated sharply during her detention. She has serious health problems that need regular medical care. Prison authorities denied her adequate medical examination and treatment. By early 2021, she was in severe pain and her health had seriously worsened.

In rare family visits, relatives reported that Solafa appeared weak and unable to walk without assistance. She had lost significant weight and had stopped eating regularly. Prison authorities confiscated all of her personal belongings and forbade her cellmates from speaking with her, isolating her further.

On 30 January 2021, Solafa's lawyers submitted a formal report to Egyptian authorities documenting abuses she had suffered in detention. The report detailed nighttime interrogations during which she was blindfolded and threatened. Guards told her that if she refused to inform on other detainees, she would

never see her husband or her son again. The threats extended to her family outside prison.

Legal Proceedings

No trial took place before her release in April 2021. She was held in Supreme State Security case 488/2019 on charges of joining a terrorist group and spreading false news. On 30 August 2020, while still detained, she was questioned in a second case, 855/2020, on new charges that included misuse of social media. Egyptian prosecutors repeatedly renewed Solafa's pretrial detention under the country's system that permits detention for up to two years pending investigation. This system allows authorities to circumvent judicial oversight and effectively imprison individuals without conviction or due process.

The charges against Solafa, terrorism-related offenses and spreading false news, are commonly deployed against journalists, human rights defenders, and political critics in Egypt. The accusations lack substantive evidence and appear designed to punish her for her journalism.

International Response

In February 2021, eight international human rights organizations submitted an urgent letter to the United States Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, calling on the U.S. government to demand Solafa's immediate release. The letter was made public in March 2021. It highlighted Solafa's urgent medical needs and the arbitrary nature of her detention, urging direct U.S. engagement with the Egyptian government given the two countries' close relationship and ongoing aid negotiations.

Despite international recognition of her work and widespread advocacy for her release, Solafa remained in detention until her release in April 2021. On 26 September 2021 she left Egypt for security and political reasons and settled in France. Her case illustrates the broader climate of repression facing journalists in Egypt, where independent reporting has been systematically criminalized and those who document abuses face prolonged imprisonment, torture, and medical neglect.

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SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express grave concern about the ongoing transnational repression targeting human rights defender Solafa Magdy, journalist reporting on human rights and press freedom issues. The reach of state intimidation across borders, including against family members in Egypt, must end.

In brief: Egyptian journalist and 2020 IWMF Courage in Journalism Award winner, detained in November 2019 on terrorism and false news charges and released in April 2021. She left Egypt in September 2021 and lives in exile in France. She was denied medical care for serious health problems while held in pretrial detention.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Immediately end all transnational targeting of Solafa Magdy, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment;
2. Withdraw any in-absentia convictions or politically motivated charges tied to peaceful human rights work;
3. Comply with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and OHCHR guidance on transnational repression.

I will continue to monitor this case until Solafa Magdy's family and contacts in Egypt can live free from state reprisal.

Respectfully,

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