Advocacy dossier

Tarek Al-Selkawi

طارق السلكاوى

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Egypt**

Tarek Al-Selkawi is a human rights lawyer who defended detainees and pressed for legal reform. Arrested in 2018, he was tortured in custody, leaving his left arm and leg paralysed. He now moves by wheelchair and is serving a fifteen-year sentence.

01

The case at a glance

Tarek Al-Selkawi is a human rights lawyer who defended detainees and pressed for legal reform. Arrested in 2018, he was tortured in custody, leaving his left arm and leg paralysed. He now moves by wheelchair and is serving a fifteen-year sentence.

Status **Imprisoned (serving sentence)**	Arrested **Nov 2018**	Country **Egypt**
Sentence Fifteen years of rigorous imprisonment.		
Charges Membership in a banned organization Disseminating false news harmful to national security		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Tarek Al-Selkawi immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

04 Provide Tarek Al-Selkawi with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

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

Torture Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

How the case unfolded

November 2018

Arrest

Arrested by security forces

Tarek Al-Selkawi was arrested in a dawn raid on his home in Mansoura, as part of a crackdown on the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms. He was held incommunicado for about three weeks.

November 2018

Reappearance in custody

Appears before the State Security Prosecution

After weeks of incommunicado detention, he appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution and was added to case 1552 of 2018 with others arrested in dawn raids.

2019

Investigation opened

Placed under investigation in a new case

While in pretrial detention, Tarek was placed under investigation in a second case numbered 1781 of 2019 Supreme State Security. The charges have not been publicly disclosed.

5 March 2023

Conviction

Sentenced to fifteen years

The First Circuit of Terrorism Felonies, sitting as an Emergency State Security Court, sentenced Tarek to fifteen years of rigorous imprisonment. The verdict cannot be appealed under Egyptian law.

5 March 2023

Final judgment

Emergency court verdict, not open to appeal

Verdicts of the Emergency State Security Court cannot be appealed, so the sentence was final when issued.

March 2025

Context

EIPR calls for release of imprisoned ECRF members

On the second anniversary of the 2023 sentences, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights called for the release of the members of the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms still in prison.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again on 12 November 2026. Tarek Al-Selkawi is still reported to be in prison serving the 15-year sentence imposed on 5 March 2023 in the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms case, in which Ezzat Ghoneim was also sentenced to 15 years and Hoda Abdel-Moneim to five years; no release, pardon or new proceedings have been reported.

Background and Work

Tarek Al-Selkawi built his career on difficult cases. As a human rights lawyer based in Egypt, he focused on civil and political rights, representing detainees caught in the machinery of the security state. His work involved defending individuals accused under terrorism and national security laws, many of whom faced prolonged pretrial detention and allegations of torture. He also advocated publicly for legal reforms aimed at curbing abuses within the justice system.

Al-Selkawi was associated with the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms, an organization that provided legal aid and documented rights violations. The group became a target for authorities who viewed its work as a challenge to state narratives around security and stability.

The Arrest

In early November 2018, security forces arrested Tarek Al-Selkawi in a dawn raid on his home in Mansoura. The arrest formed part of a broader campaign against the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms. Multiple lawyers and staff members were detained in connection with what prosecutors labeled case number 1552 of 2018 Supreme State Security. The investigation accused the organization of collaborating with a banned group and spreading false news, charges commonly deployed against human rights defenders in Egypt.

Al-Selkawi was taken into custody without a warrant being presented to his family. His whereabouts remained unknown for about three weeks, a pattern consistent with enforced disappearance, until he appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution in late November 2018.

Detention Conditions and Health

While in detention, Tarek was subjected to torture. The methods and duration have not been publicly detailed, but the consequences are documented and visible. He sustained injuries that resulted in paralysis of his left arm and leg. Medical care was withheld or inadequate during the critical period following the abuse, exacerbating the damage.

Tarek now relies on a wheelchair for mobility. His condition requires ongoing medical intervention, including physical therapy and pain management, which are not available in the prison environment where he is held.

In 2019, while still in pretrial detention, Tarek was placed under investigation in a new case numbered 1781 of 2019 Supreme State Security. The nature of the charges in this second case has not been made public, but the practice of layering investigations is a documented tactic used to extend detention indefinitely.

Legal Proceedings

The trial in case 1552 of 2018 took place before the First Circuit of Terrorism Felonies, sitting as an Emergency State Security Court based at Badr Criminal Court. These courts were established under Egypt's long-running state of emergency and operate without the possibility of appeal. Verdicts are final upon issuance.

On 5 March 2023, Judge Mohamed Saied El Sherbiny sentenced Tarek Al-Selkawi to fifteen years of rigorous imprisonment. The verdict was handed down alongside sentences for other defendants in the same case, collectively known in Egyptian media as the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms case. The charges centered on membership in a banned organization and disseminating false news harmful to national security.

No avenue exists under Egyptian law to appeal verdicts issued by Emergency State Security Courts. The sentences are implemented immediately, and defendants have no recourse to higher judicial review.

Current Situation

Tarek Al-Selkawi remains in prison, serving his fifteen-year sentence. His health continues to deteriorate due to inadequate medical care and the lack of rehabilitation services for his paralysis. He requires assistance for basic daily activities and remains dependent on a wheelchair.

The second investigation, case 1781 of 2019, remains open, creating the possibility of additional charges and extended detention even beyond the current sentence. Family visits have been reported as irregular, though specific denials have not been documented in available records.

His case has been cited by international human rights organizations as emblematic of Egypt's systematic targeting of lawyers who defend political prisoners and document state abuses. The torture he endured and the impunity surrounding it reflect broader patterns of ill-treatment in Egyptian detention facilities.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/tarek-al-selkawi/

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 2018-11. To report an error: archive@humena.org