

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

YASSER ABU AL-ELA

ياسر أبو العلا

Detained (pretrial) **Egypt**

Yasser Abu Al-Ela is a journalist arrested in March 2024, forcibly disappeared for 50 days, and subjected to torture. He remains in pretrial detention and was sentenced in absentia in a separate case.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-EG-2026-010

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Yasser Abu Al-Ela is a journalist arrested in March 2024, forcibly disappeared for 50 days, and subjected to torture. He remains in pretrial detention and was sentenced in absentia in a separate case.

STATUS	**Detained (pretrial)**
ARRESTED	**10 Mar 2024**
COUNTRY	**Egypt**
SENTENCE	**Sentenced in absentia on 10 November 2024 in Case No. 339 of 2022 (life imprisonment according to some sources, 25 years according to others). Case No. 1568 of 2024 has been referred to trial; no verdict known.**
CHARGES	**Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security): joining a terrorist group, spreading false news, misusing a website and financing** **Case No. 339 of 2022 (Supreme State Security), in which he was sentenced in absentia**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Release Yasser Abu Al-Ela 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.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/yasser-abu-al-ela/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Denial of family visits	UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 58
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
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
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

10 March 2024

ARREST

Arrested by Egyptian security forces

Egyptian security forces arrested Yasser Abu Al-Ela and took him to an undisclosed location, beginning a period of enforced disappearance that lasted nearly 50 days.

10 March 2024

START OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Taken to an unknown location after arrest

was arrested on 10 March and taken to an unknown location

April 2024

REAPPEARANCE IN CUSTODY

Reappeared before prosecution after 50 days

Abu Al-Ela was brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution for the first time since his arrest. He reported that he had been subjected to physical and psychological torture during his enforced disappearance.

27 April 2024

CONTEXT

Wife and her sister arrested in reprisal

Security forces arrested his wife, Naglaa Fathi, her sister and her brother at his home after she complained about his disappearance. The brother was soon released; the two women were held in an undisclosed location.

11 May 2024

CONTEXT

Wife and sister-in-law appear before prosecution

Naglaa Fathi and her sister appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution after two weeks in an undisclosed location and were charged with joining and financing a terrorist group in Case No. 2369.

10 August 2024

CONTEXT

Announces a hunger strike over his treatment in prison

He began a hunger strike in protest against solitary confinement, denial of family visits and severe restrictions on his movement. No later report says whether it continues.

25 August 2024

PRETRIAL DETENTION RENEWED

Detention renewed for another 15 days

On 25 August, the SSSP renewed Abu Al-Ela's detention for an additional 15 days pending investigation

10 November 2024

RULING IN ABSENTIA

Sentenced in absentia in Case 339/2022

The Terrorism Criminal Court at the Badr Court Complex sentenced him in absentia in Case No. 339 of 2022 while he was held in a separate case. Sources differ on the term: some report life imprisonment, others 25 years.

May 2026

REFERRAL TO TRIAL

Case 1568/2024 referred to trial

By May 2026, Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security Investigation), in which he has been held in pretrial detention since 2024, had been referred to trial. The referral date was not given.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Yasser Abu Al-Ela is a journalist who has worked for more than two decades covering political and human rights issues in Egypt. His reporting focused on state abuses, dissent, and the erosion of civil liberties under the military-backed government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. In a media environment where independent journalism is effectively criminalised, Abu Al-Ela's work placed him at direct risk.

Egypt remains one of the world's largest jailers of journalists. According to the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, at least 19 journalists are currently imprisoned, many of whom have been held beyond the two-year legal maximum for pretrial detention. Reporters Without Borders ranked Egypt 169th out of 180 countries in its 2026 World Press Freedom Index, noting that pluralism is virtually nonexistent and that journalists face systematic repression under the military dictatorship.

The Arrest and Enforced Disappearance

Egyptian security forces arrested Yasser Abu Al-Ela on 10 March 2024. He was taken to an undisclosed location and held incommunicado for nearly 50 days. His family received no information about his whereabouts or condition. This practice, enforced disappearance, has become routine in Egypt's security apparatus, used to isolate detainees, facilitate torture, and instill fear in families and communities.

Abu Al-Ela was eventually brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution in late April 2024. During questioning, he reported that he had been subjected to physical and psychological torture during his period of disappearance. Such treatment is prohibited under international human rights law, yet it remains widespread in Egypt's detention facilities and security installations.

Targeting of Family Members

On 27 April 2024, security forces arrested Abu Al-Ela's wife, Naglaa Fathi, and her sister. They were held in an undisclosed location for two weeks before appearing before the Supreme State Security Prosecution on 11 May 2024. The arrests were not based on any independent allegations; they were designed to pressure Abu Al-Ela and to punish his family for his journalism.

The targeting of family members has become a recurring pattern in Egypt. Wives, children, siblings, and parents of journalists, activists, and human rights defenders are arrested, interrogated, and sometimes prosecuted as a form of collective punishment. This tactic violates the principle of individual criminal responsibility and constitutes a form of psychological torture against the primary target.

Detention Conditions and Hunger Strike

Abu Al-Ela has been held in solitary confinement for extended periods. He has been denied family visits and subjected to severe restrictions on his ability to leave his cell. These conditions amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. At one point during the periodic renewals of his pretrial detention, he announced that he had gone on hunger strike to protest his treatment.

As of May 2026, Abu Al-Ela was held in pretrial detention in Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security Investigation), which had been referred to trial. He had then been held for more than two years without a verdict, exceeding the legal maximum period permitted under Egyptian law.

In Absentia Life Sentence in Parallel Case

On 10 November 2024, the Terrorism Criminal Court, sitting at the Badr Court Complex, sentenced Yasser Abu Al-Ela in absentia in Case No. 339 of 2022 (to life imprisonment according to some sources, 25 years according to others) (Supreme State Security Investigation). He was not present in court because he was being held in pretrial detention in the separate case (No. 1568 of 2024). The in absentia conviction exemplifies the absurdity of Egypt's security prosecutions, where defendants are tried and sentenced while already detained on other charges, often without access to meaningful legal representation.

Broader Context: Journalism and Repression in Egypt

Yasser Abu Al-Ela's prosecution is part of a broader pattern of repression targeting journalists and media workers in Egypt. In the same case, cartoonist Ashraf Omar has also been prosecuted. At least 18 other journalists remain detained, including Safa Al-Korbeigi, Karim Ibrahim, Mostafa Al-Khatib, Ahmed Sabeeh, Badr Mohamed Badr, Mahmoud Saad Diab, Hamdy Mokhtar, Tawfik Ghanem, Mohamed Saeed Fahmy, Mohamed Abu Al-Moaty, Mostafa Saad, Abdullah Samir Mubarak, Medhat Ramadan, Ahmed Abu Zeid Al-Tantawi, Ramadan Goweda, Khaled Mamdouh, and Hussein Karim.

In recent months, the Egyptian government has promoted a narrative of improving human rights conditions, particularly as the country faces fragile economic prospects and regional instability. The reality on the ground contradicts this narrative. The crackdown on freedom of expression and the media persists. Mass arbitrary detention, unfair trials, enforced disappearance, and torture, including sexual violence, continue to be used against peaceful dissent. Political participation remains severely restricted, and religious minorities face targeted persecution.

Between late 2024 and May 2025, approximately 6,000 individuals were referred to trial before terrorism court circuits, most of whom had spent prolonged periods in pretrial detention. Limited presidential pardons have not resulted in any meaningful decrease in the number of political detainees. Prominent figures such as Ahmed Douma and Sayed Moshagheb were re-arrested shortly after completing unjust prison sentences and brought up on new charges, illustrating the cyclical nature of repression in Egypt.

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SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand the immediate release of Yasser Abu Al-Ela, journalist covering political and human rights issues, currently detained in Egypt since 10 March 2024, and an end to all reprisals tied to this case.

In brief: Yasser Abu Al-Ela is a journalist arrested in March 2024, forcibly disappeared for 50 days, and subjected to torture. He remains in pretrial detention and was sentenced in absentia in a separate case.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Release Yasser Abu Al-Ela immediately and unconditionally;
2. Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights;
3. Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

I will continue to monitor this case until Yasser Abu Al-Ela is free.

Respectfully,

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