

Advocacy dossier

Yasser Abu Al-Ela

ياسر أبو العلا

Detained (pretrial) **Egypt**

Yasser Abu Al-Ela is an Egyptian journalist arrested in March 2024 and forcibly disappeared for about 50 days. He has been on trial since May 2026 in a terrorism case alongside the cartoonist Ashraf Omar, while also serving a sentence passed in absentia in a separate case in November 2024.

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The case at a glance

Yasser Abu Al-Ela is an Egyptian journalist arrested in March 2024 and forcibly disappeared for about 50 days. He has been on trial since May 2026 in a terrorism case alongside the cartoonist Ashraf Omar, while also serving a sentence passed in absentia in a separate case in November 2024.

Status **Detained (pretrial)**	Arrested **10 Mar 2024**	Country **Egypt**

Sentence Sentenced in absentia on 10 November 2024 in Case No. 339 of 2022 (25 years according to CPJ and AFTE; life imprisonment according to a May 2026 joint statement). In Case No. 1568 of 2024, referred to trial in November 2025, the trial was continuing with no verdict.

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

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

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.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

03

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

Reprisal against relatives

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.

4 November 2025

Pretrial detention renewed

Terrorism circuit renews his detention for 45 days

The First Terrorism Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court, sitting at the Badr Prison complex, renewed his pretrial detention for 45 days in Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security), on charges of joining a terrorist group, spreading false news and a financing offence.

15 November 2025

Referral to trial

Case 1568/2024 referred to trial

On 15 November 2025 the Supreme State Security Prosecution referred Case No. 1568 of 2024, in which he has been held in pretrial detention since 2024, to the Cairo Criminal Court, where it was registered as Case No. 11846 of 2025 (Fifth Settlement Felonies). Twelve defendants were referred, including the cartoonist Ashraf Omar.

10 May 2026

Hearing postponed

Trial opens and is adjourned; he is not brought to court

The Second Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court opened the trial of 12 defendants in Case No. 11846 of 2025 (Fifth Settlement Felonies), the referral number of State Security Case No. 1568 of 2024, among them the cartoonist Ashraf Omar and the journalist Ramadan Gouida. He was not brought from prison and was tried in absentia at this session. The court adjourned the case so that the defence could review the case file.

13 July 2026

Hearing postponed

Trial adjourned to hear the first prosecution witness

The Cairo Criminal Court, sitting inside Badr Prison, adjourned the trial so that the first prosecution witness, the investigating police officer, could attend; the case was adjourned to 12 October 2026.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Yasser Abu Al-Ela remains in detention in Badr prison. His case, referred to the Cairo Criminal Court in November 2025, went to trial on 10 May 2026 alongside the cartoonist Ashraf Omar and ten other defendants, and has since been adjourned several times without a verdict; the 25-year sentence passed on him in absentia in November 2024 in a separate case still stands.

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.

Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security Investigation) was referred to the Cairo Criminal Court on 15 November 2025 and registered as Case No. 11846 of 2025 (Fifth Settlement Felonies). The trial of the 12 defendants, among them the cartoonist Ashraf Omar and the journalist Ramadan Gouida, opened on 10 May 2026; Abu Al-Ela was not brought to that session. The court adjourned the case in May and again on 13 July 2026. 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.

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

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