Egypt | After 100 Days, Omar Salah Marei's Arbitrary Detention Must End

Joint Statements · Egypt · 26 August 2026

We, the undersigned organizations, renew our call for the immediate and unconditional release of Egyptian filmmaker and screenwriter Omar Salah Marei and for an end to his pretrial detention in Case No. 3383 of 2026 (Supreme State Security Prosecution). Our appeal comes as Omar marks 100 days in detention and has now had his pretrial detention renewed for the eighth time. We also express our grave concern over the continued denial of the specialized medical care his health condition requires, despite repeated requests from his family and legal defense team.

Security forces raided Omar Salah Marei's home on the evening of 11 May 2026 without presenting a judicial warrant. Officers reportedly forced entry into the apartment, damaged property, confiscated four laptop computers, two mobile phones, and seized approximately EGP 50,000 in cash, which was neither listed among the seized items nor recorded in the prosecution's investigation records, before taking him to an undisclosed location. He was then subjected to several days of enforced disappearance, during which he was denied contact with both his family and lawyers, before he was brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution on 16 May 2026.

Omar Salah Marei is widely recognized as one of the prominent young voices in Egypt's independent film scene. His work has been screened at local and international film festivals and has received multiple artistic awards. Since his appearance before the prosecution, the authorities have repeatedly renewed his pretrial detention, most recently on 17 August 2026, bringing his total time in custody to more than 100 days in connection with a case stemming from his peaceful exercise of his freedom of expression rights.

The charges against him are based on social media posts in which he criticized the political and social situation in Egypt and expressed views related to the country's film industry, including through satirical commentary on artistic production and the narratives shaping films and television series. Detaining an individual solely for peacefully expressing opinions constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of expression. Targeting a filmmaker and screenwriter because of his views or artistic and intellectual output further undermines artistic freedom and cultural rights while sending a chilling message to artists and creators across the country.

The undersigned organizations are also increasingly concerned about Omar's health and well-being. He suffers from a chronic thyroid condition that requires regular medical monitoring and laboratory testing to ensure proper treatment. In addition, he was recovering from recent wrist surgery at the time of his arrest. Despite repeated requests submitted to the relevant authorities, Omar has not

received all the necessary medical examinations, follow-up care, and treatment he requires, including routine tests related to his thyroid condition, further assessment and treatment of his left-hand injury, and the physical therapy recommended by medical professionals.

These concerns are not about general conditions of healthcare in detention facilities; rather, they concern specific and well-documented medical requests submitted by his family and legal team over recent months. These requests have included thyroid function tests, additional examinations and imaging related to his injury, consultations with orthopedic, vascular, and psychiatric specialists, and the continuation of prescribed physical therapy sessions. Many of these requests remain unanswered.

Concern is further heightened by the continued refusal to allow Omar's family access to his medical reports and diagnostic imaging or to obtain copies for review by independent physicians. This restriction significantly limits the family's ability to monitor his health and assess whether he is receiving adequate medical care. After more than 100 days in detention, the failure to address these medical needs can no longer be viewed as a mere administrative delay. It instead represents a growing risk to his physical and mental health, with potentially lasting consequences. The undersigned organizations also recall that Omar was reportedly subjected to an assault while in detention, placing an additional obligation on the Egyptian authorities to ensure his safety, protect him from further harm, and safeguard his physical and psychological well-being.

Omar Salah Marei's case cannot be viewed in isolation. It forms part of a broader pattern of increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and artistic freedom in Egypt, where authorities continue to rely on broad and recurring charges to prosecute journalists, artists, writers, cartoonists, creators, and individuals expressing dissenting opinions. These practices contribute to the shrinking of civic space and undermine fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Egyptian Constitution as well as international human rights treaties ratified by Egypt.

Now, 100 days into his detention, hundreds of artists, filmmakers, writers, human rights defenders, institutions, and cultural figures from around the world have joined growing international calls for Omar's immediate release. More than 400 individuals have signed an international petition demanding his freedom, reflecting the growing domestic and international solidarity surrounding his case. The case has also attracted sustained international attention. European Union Special Representative for Human Rights Kajsa Ollongren has called for Omar's release, along with the release of others detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, and urged the Egyptian authorities to ensure that he receives the treatment and medication he needs.

As we reaffirm our full solidarity with Omar Salah Marei and his family, we call on the Egyptian authorities to:

1. **Immediately and unconditionally release Omar Salah Marei and drop all charges arising solely from his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.**
2. **Ensure immediate and unrestricted access to all necessary medical care for Omar Salah Marei, including specialist examinations, diagnostic testing, prescribed treatment,**

medication, physical therapy, and independent medical oversight, and provide his family with access to his medical records and reports.

3. **Conduct a prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigation into his enforced disappearance and the assault he reportedly suffered in detention, and hold those responsible accountable.**
4. **End the targeting of artists, creators, and individuals for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, and ensure respect for and protection of freedom of expression and artistic freedom in accordance with Egypt's constitutional and international human rights obligations.**

Signatories:

- Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)
- El Nadim Center
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- MENA Rights Group
- Committee for Justice (CFJ)
- International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk (ICFR)
- □□Gohoud to Support Human Rights Defenders
- The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
- REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression
- ARTICLE 19
- Tbian for Rights and Freedoms
- Refugees Platform in Egypt
- Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Index on Censorship
- PEN America
- Egyptian Human Rights Forum