# Egypt | Rights Groups Call for Release of Filmmaker Omar Salah Marei and his Immediate Access to Medical Care

Joint Statements · Egypt · 23 May 2026

We, the undersigned organisations, condemn the continued detention of Egyptian filmmaker and screenwriter Omar Salah Marei. We call for his immediate and unconditional release, the dropping of all charges against him, and the closure of Case No. 3835 of 2026 (Supreme State Security).

We are gravely concerned over the serious deterioration of Marei's health, as he has been denied necessary medical treatment since his arrest on 11 May 2026. He was forcibly disappeared for several days before being brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution on 16 May, which ordered his pretrial detention for 15 days pending investigation on charges of "spreading false news," based solely on his social media posts. The posts reflected a critical perspective on the broader media situation alongside views addressing Egypt's film industry, including Marei's use of satire to comment on what he described as the industry's dominance over the narratives shaping artistic productions, particularly in films and television series.

A security force in plainclothes had forcibly raided his home without presenting a judicial warrant. They damaged some of the home's furnishings and confiscated money and personal belongings before arresting Marei and taking him to an unknown location, where he was interrogated about some of his films and the characters depicted in them.

The prosecution is scheduled on 25 May to review the renewal of Marei's pretrial detention for an additional 15 days. This follows proceedings initiated immediately upon his appearance before the prosecution, without allowing him to communicate with his family or lawyer after detaining him in an undisclosed location, in complete isolation from the outside world. These conditions constitute a serious violation of fundamental fair trial guarantees.

On Wednesday, 20 May, Marei's family sent telegrams to the warden of 10th of Ramadan Prison (No. 1673650654), the Attorney General for the Supreme State Security Prosecution (No. 1673650641), and the Minister of Interior (No. 1673650642), demanding that he be granted access to necessary medical treatment.

Marei suffers from a thyroid disorder that requires consistent daily medication to compensate for his inability to produce essential hormones for normal bodily function. Depriving him of this treatment since 11 May poses serious health risks and could lead to life-threatening complications. Prior to his arrest, he was also recovering from recent wrist surgery that required ongoing medical care and physiotherapy. He has been denied that treatment, reportedly resulting in complications

and swelling in his left arm, according to documented information.

The continued denial of medical care constitutes a violation of the right to health and is inconsistent with Egypt's obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It may also amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment prohibited under international law, including the UN Convention Against Torture.

Marei's case does not exist in isolation. It reflects a broader pattern of a harsh and ongoing crackdown (PDF) on freedom of expression in Egypt, taking place within an increasingly closed civic space, alongside mounting restrictions on artistic freedom. This includes the systematic targeting of artists and cultural figures through vague and recurring charges. For over a decade, the authorities have relied on such accusations to pursue critics, journalists, artists, and creatives, resulting in years of imprisonment, either through prolonged pretrial detention or through trials that fall short of international fair trial standards.

The current period has seen an escalation in security and judicial actions against a number of artists and creators. These include cartoonist Ashraf Omar, who is scheduled to appear before a terrorism circuit on 13 July 2026 on fabricated charges of terrorism financing, and poet Ahmed Douma, who is awaiting a verdict in his trial on charges of spreading false news on 3 June 2026. The crackdown also extends to poet Galal El□Beheiri and filmmaker Abdelrahman El□Ansari, who has been re-arrested after years of prior detention in similar cases spanning over seven years, as well as at least 19 journalists currently detained, according to the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate. Content creators on social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have also been increasingly targeted. This troubling pattern reflects a broader trend of criminalising peaceful expression and creative and digital production, undermining the right to freedom of expression and shrinking civic space for independent and critical voices.

As the undersigned organisations stress the importance of Egypt upholding its international obligations and translating into tangible action its stated commitment to improving its human rights record, we reiterate our calls for:

- The immediate and unconditional release of filmmaker Omar Salah Marei and the dismissal of the fabricated charges against him.
- Immediate access to adequate medical care and treatment.
- Accountability for those responsible for his unlawful arrest and enforced disappearance for several days, in violation of the law.
- An end to the systematic targeting of freedom of expression and artistic freedom.
- The release of all detained artists, creators, and individuals imprisoned for exercising their right to free expression in Egypt.

**Signatory Organisations:**

1. Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)

2. Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)
3. El Nadim Center
4. Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
5. Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms
6. REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression
7. Committee for Justice (CFJ)
8. Skyline International for Human Rights (SIHR)
9. CIVICUS
10. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
11. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
12. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
13. PEN America
14. Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
15. EgyptWide for Human Rights
16. Gohoud to Support Human Rights Defenders
17. Article 19
18. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)

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HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · info@humena.org