Global Legal Community Stands in Solidarity with Egyptian Lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer

Joint Statements · Egypt · 17 December 2021

We, the undersigned members of the global legal community, stand in solidarity with Egyptian lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer as he awaits his verdict on baseless criminal charges on December 20, 2021, following years of reprisal by the Egyptian state. We call on the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against el-Baqer, to promptly release him unconditionally, and to lift the restrictive measures imposed on him for his work as an attorney. We further call on the Egyptian authorities to halt the targeting of Egyptian lawyers for their legal defense work and exercise of fundamental freedoms. Mohamed el-Baqer is a human rights lawyer and the founder and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms. He has a long history defending individuals whose rights have been violated, including religious and ethnic minorities, and of providing *pro bono* legal assistance to those prosecuted for exercising their rights to assembly and expression. In November 2020, el-Baqer was awarded the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) Human Rights Award for his "courage, determination, and commitment to defending human rights in Egypt." In 2021, he was one of three finalists for the UIA/Lexis Nexus Rule of Law Award after being nominated by the Law Society of England and Wales. Members of the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament, and the UN Special Procedures are only some of the individuals and entities from around the world who have stood in solidarity with el-Baqer. El-Baqer was first arrested on September 29, 2019 while representing his client, renowned blogger and activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, before the Supreme State Security Prosecution. He was questioned in the same case, faced with a series of arbitrary charges, and remanded into pretrial detention. Since then, el-Baqer has been charged in additional criminal cases through "rotation" *(tadwir),* the practice of ordering individuals into new criminal cases, where the charges and fact patterns are similar if not the same as earlier cases and which facilitates the bypassing of release orders and the circumventing of pretrial detention maximums. El-Baqer was also designated under the country's terrorist list pending a case for which he has never been questioned; as a result, he faces a travel ban, asset freeze, and potential disbarment. Most recently, he was referred to Emergency State Security Court on the baseless charge of "publishing false news that harms the country's interests on his social media page." His trial has continued despite President Sisi's declaration ending the formal state of emergency in October 2021. A verdict, against which there can be no judicial appeal, is set to be handed down on December 20, 2021. Since his arrest, el-Baqer has faced extensive due process and other human rights violations. His pretrial detention has been regularly renewed in near-automatic fashion and without proper review; at times, he has not been physically brought before the authority reviewing his detention. His legal team has been unable to visit him in prison since COVID-19 restrictions were announced in March 2020. As his trial ensued, the court has refused to allow his team permission to photocopy the 1,500-page case file and his legal team has been denied the right to present a proper defense. In

custody, el-Baqer has been subject to ill-treatment and inhumane detention conditions in the maximum security prison in which he is held. These conditions, coupled with the denial of his outdoor recreation time, and access to books, a clock, and a mirror have resulted in a severe deterioration to his physical and mental health. The authorities' targeting of el-Baqer is emblematic of Egypt's treatment of human rights lawyers, who are increasingly subject to harassment, threats, prosecution, arrest, and punitive administrative measures for their legal defense work. As members of the global legal community, we cannot stand by as we watch fellow members of our profession be subjected to such abuses. Egypt's targeting of its legal community is an alarming escalation against the country's "last line of defense" and threatens to do lasting harm to the legal profession and the rule of law. Signatories *(Listed in alphabetical order)* Organizations

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- Avocats sans Frontières
- Bar Human Rights
- Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
- Democratic Transition & Human Rights Support Center (DAAM)
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- El Nadim Center against Violence and Torture
- European Criminal Bar Association
- German Bar Association
- Guernica 37 Chambers
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Institute of the Rule of Law, International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL)
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Law Society of Ireland
- Lawyers for Lawyers
- Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)
- MENA Rights Group
- Mwatana for Human Rights
- Ordem Dos Advogados – Portugal

- Paris Bar / Ordre des avocats de Paris
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- SMEX
- Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research
- The Freedom Initiative
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)

Lawyers and Law Students* **Please note that individual lawyers and law students are signing onto this statement in their personal capacities. Affiliations are only listed as an identifying descriptor.*

- Adriana Haji Zainie, York Law School
- Amel Delimi
- Amelia Dagen, Georgetown University Law Center
- Anaheed Mobaraki, Columbia Law School
- Anastasia Buizza
- Annabel Tompson, University of York
- Annabelle Kennaugh, University of York
- António Horta Pinto, Ordem dos Advogados Portugueses
- Anwar al-Bunni, Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research
- Ali Al Jabal, Al Jabal Consultancy W.L.L., Bahrain
- Alicia Karpasea-Jones, York Law School
- Apar Gupta, Advocate
- Avi Singh, Director, Protection of Lawyers, Unione Internationale Avocats
- Bupe Musonda
- Cameron J. Parry, York Law School
- Cameron Foster, University of York
- Camila Freitas Monnerat
- Carlos Marcelino
- Caroline Hunter, York Law School, University of York
- Chloe Southall, University of York
- Christoph von Wilcken, Vice-President, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, European Association of Lawyers (AEA-EAL)
- Clare Leonoff-Harris, University of York
- Connor van Dartel, University of York
- Darren Fenwick

- Deena R. Hurwitz, Esq., Virginia U.S.A.
- Dillon Thompson, University of York
- Divya Korada, Columbia Law Student
- Ed Clothier
- Elisa Massimino, Georgetown University Law Center
- Elisabete Marisa Pinto Da Costa, Portuguese Lawyer
- Elsa Pedroso, Lawyer
- El□bieta Baranowska, Attorney at Law
- Fleur Pollono, Avocate Nantes
- François Moyse, Moyse & Associates
- Frederico de Sousa Lemos, Advogado, Portugal
- Fritz Streiff, Human Rights Lawyer and Podcaster
- Gelson Lima Dos Santos Baía, Ordem dos Advogados Portugueses
- Gissou Nia, Human Rights Lawyer
- Halem Henish, Human Rights Lawyer
- Hayley Bingham
- Henrique Delgado Antunes, Universidade Católica Portuguesa – Faculdade de Direito
- Humzah Qureshi
- Ilona Georgieva, York Law School
- Dr. Ioana Cismas, Centre for Applied Human Rights & York Law School, UK
- Inês Regalado Ribeiro, Lawyer
- Inês Teixeira, Ordem dos Advogados
- Issraa Faiz, Georgetown University Law Center
- Iwona Dolna, Legal Advisor
- James Killen, University of York, UK
- Jane Lee, University of York
- Janistar Catherine Gilman, University of York
- Jakub Puszkarski, The Gda□sk Bar Association (Poland)
- Jasmine Elmasry
- Jenny Gibbons, University of York
- Jessica Aguiar, Criminal Lawyer
- Jessica Costello, York University Law School
- Jessica Doumit, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

- Jessica Gracie, University of York
- John Chappell, Georgetown University Law Center
- John Gray
- Dr. Jonathan Fisk, York Law School, UK
- Joanna Łojkowska, Attorney at Law
- João Paulo Soares dos Santos, SS Advocacia & Consultoria Jurídica
- Joseph O'Sullivan, Barrister-at- Law, Human Rights Committee of the Bar of Ireland
- Juliette Gunn-Roberts, University of York
- Kate Salvage, University of York
- Kayleigh Bonner
- Kiera McCourt
- Kiran Thind, York Law School
- Layla Khayyat, University of York
- Lana Marie Wilks, York Law School
- Leilani Farha, Global Director, The Shift and former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing
- Lloyd Birch, University of York Law School
- Lurdes Simões de Carvalho, Advogada
- M L Calhaz
- Magdalena Witkowska, Law Firm Kancelaria Radców Prawnych Gratus s.c.
- Maggie Hadley, Columbia Law School
- Mai El-Sadany, The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- Maître Magali Guadalupe Miranda, Avocate au Barreau des Hauts-de-Seine
- Malick Falola, Cabinet Falola
- Mara Ferreira, Lawyer
- Maria Inês Almeida de Sousa Simões, NCF Advogados
- María Galán López, Asociación Libre de Abogadas y Abogados
- Marika Sosnowski, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)
- Marie Flynn BL
- Matt Matravers, Professor of Law, University of York
- Michelle Liu, Georgetown Law
- Miguel Mota Cardoso
- Millie Edey, University of York

- Mostafa Fouad, HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Nada Ahmed, Ulster University
- Nadia Bouajila, American University, Washington College of Law
- Naira Martirosian, University of York
- Nandini Chandegra, University of York Law School
- Natalia Krapiva, Access Now
- Natasha Arnpriester
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- Sarah Burnard, University of York
- Sarah Ludwick, Georgetown University Law Center
- Sarah Morsheimer, Georgetown University Law Center
- Shabnam Mojtahedi, Lawyer
- Sharia Mayfield, Mayfield Law Office, LLC
- Sherif Azer, The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Sousa Moreira, RSN Advogados
- Susan Deller Ross, Georgetown University Law Center

- Dr. Sue Westwood, York Law School, University of York
- Stephen Rapp, Former US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice
- Tânia Dias, Lawyer
- Toby Cadman, Guernica 37 Chambers
- Tomasz Wolny Dunst, Wolny Dunst Law Firm
- Vo Le Nam, University of York
- Wade H. McMullen, Jr., Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- William Oh, Columbia Law ‘24
- William Ogden, University of York
- Yasmin Omar, International Lawyer
- Professor Yasushi Higashizawa, Japan Federation of Bar Associations
- Zeinab Khalil, Columbia Law School

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