

# URGENT ACTION

## ABUSED JOURNALIST ACCUSED OF TERRORISM

Journalist Mohamed Salah has been arbitrarily detained for 20 months without charge or trial. After a court ordered his release, prosecutors detained him pending investigations into a new case on bogus terrorism accusations. No investigations were opened into claims that he had been beaten at a police station in December 2020. Two journalists, married couple Solafa Magdy and Hossam el-Sayed, who were arrested together with Mohamed Salah in November 2019, were provisionally released on 14 April pending investigations.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi**  
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Dear Counsellor,

I am writing to raise concerns about the arbitrary detention of journalist **Mohamed Salah** since 26 November 2019 and about alarming reports that he has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

On 19 July 2020, a court ordered Mohamed Salah's release in relation to case No. 488 of 2019, connected to the March 2019 anti-government protests, and he was transferred to Dar Essalam police station in Cairo on 23 July 2020 in preparation for his release. However, on 23 August 2020, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP), a special branch of the Public Prosecution responsible for prosecuting crimes that relate to "state security", ordered his detention pending investigations into a new case (No. 855/2020) over unfounded terrorism accusations.

According to his family, he was not allowed visits from his transfer to the police station on 23 July 2020 until 28 December 2020, when relatives saw him for a few minutes after having submitted multiple requests and complaints in December 2020 to the Cabinet of Egypt, which is presided by the Prime Minister. Relatives of his cellmates followed suit in submitting similar complaints. On 8 January 2021, in apparent retaliation for these complaints, security forces stripped the fourteen detainees held in Cell 6 of Dar Essalam police station naked, suspended them by their feet and beat them using batons and water pipes. Security forces also confiscated their blankets, flooded the cell with cold water and denied them health care, including for injuries sustained as a result of beatings. On 10 January 2021, Mohamed Salah was transferred to the Tora Investigations Prison, in Cairo, but barred from family visits until the end of March 2021. Informed sources reported that Mohamed Salah's injuries were infected and his torn clothes were covered with blood when he was first transferred to prison. He received some basic treatment at the prison clinic, including bandage changes. Authorities ignored lawyer and family requests to refer him to forensic examination to record his injuries.

**I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Mohamed Salah as he is held solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights and to open prompt, independent, impartial, and effective investigations into allegations that he had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in Dar Essalam police station . Pending his release, he must be granted access to regular family visits, his lawyers and adequate health care and protected from further torture and other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah** are freelance journalists working for different media outlets. The three are under investigations by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP), a special branch of the Public Prosecution responsible for prosecuting crimes that relate to “state security”, as part of case No. 488 of 2019, which is connected to the March 2019 anti-government protests. Solafa Magdy and Hossam el-Sayed were provisionally released on 14 April, pending investigations. Solafa Magdy and Mohamed Salah are facing trumped-up charges of “joining a terrorist group” and “spreading false news”, while Hossam el-Sayed is accused of “membership in a terrorist group”.

In the new case (No. 855/2020), SSSP prosecutors accused Mohamed Salah of “joining a terrorist group”, “spreading and broadcasting false rumours” and “misuse of social media”. On 16 March 2021, Mohamed Salah's pre-trial detention has been renewed for 45 days in his absence. In addition to Mohamed Salah, case No. 855/2020 includes other prisoners of conscience, already held in pre-trial detention in relation to separate investigations into similar unfounded terrorism-related charges, such as human rights defender and lawyer Mahienour el-Masry, journalist Esraa Abdelfattah and human rights defender and lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer.

According to information gathered by Amnesty International, prosecutors have based accusations against Mohamed Salah and the other prisoners of conscience mainly on National Security Agency (NSA) investigations, which defendants and their lawyers are not allowed to examine. Since last year, the SSSP has been increasingly bypassing court or prosecution decisions to release detainees held in prolonged pre-trial detention by issuing new detention orders covering similar charges.

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power, the authorities have cracked down on independent reporting and arbitrarily blocked hundreds of websites, raided and/or closed the offices of at least nine media outlets and arbitrarily detained scores of journalists. The arrests of Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayed and Mohamed Salah came in the context of the post-September 2019 protest crackdown, the largest on dissenting voices since 2014. Amnesty International has [documented](#) how Egyptian security forces carried-out sweeping arrests of peaceful protesters, journalists, human rights lawyers, activists and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests. In May 2021, at least 28 journalists remained behind bars solely due to their media work or for expressing critical views on their social media accounts.

Torture and other ill-treatment are prohibited under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party. Intentional acts by state agents that inflict “severe pain or suffering”, whether physical or mental, for such purposes as punishment, coercion or intimidation, obtaining a “confession”, or for any reason based on discrimination constitute torture.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic and English  
You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 13 July 2021**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** **Solafa Magdy** (she/her), **Hossam el-Sayed** (he/him), and **Mohamed Salah** (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/3631/2021/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/3631/2021/en/)