

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER TORTURED IN DETENTION

The Egyptian authorities have subjected Egyptian-British prominent activist Alaa Abdel Fattah and human rights defender and lawyer Mohamed Baker to a litany of human rights violations since their arrests on 29 September 2019, including arbitrary detention, unfair trial, torture and other ill-treatment, and periodic bans on family visits. In their latest attack on prisoners, authorities in Badr 1 prison stripped, beat and otherwise abused Mohamed Baker on 10 April and subsequently placed him in solitary confinement. Authorities also arrested Neama Hisham, Mohamed Baker's wife, on 17 April and took her to an undisclosed location, after she reported on his assault.

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

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial

Dear President,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the ongoing unjust imprisonment of Egyptian-British activist **Alaa Abdel Fattah** and human rights lawyer **Mohamed Baker**, who were convicted by an emergency court in December 2021 for "spreading false news" and sentenced to five and four years in prison, respectively, following a grossly unfair trial. The two activists have already spent 42 months in prison, in conditions that violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. In their latest assault on prisoners in Badr 1 prison, prison authorities beat Mohamed Baker and other prisoners to punish and humiliate them for seeking to intervene to protect an older prisoner from abuse. Mohamed Baker was then stripped down to his underwear and placed for three days in a "disciplinary" cell with no windows, ventilation, light, mattress or blankets and denied sufficient food and potable water. Since his removal from the "disciplinary" cell on 13 April, he has been placed in solitary confinement and denied exercise outdoors. After seeing him on 16 April, his wife **Neama Hisham** wrote on her social media platforms that he sustained injuries to his mouth, the left side of his ribcage and wrist, which was still visibly swollen. Security forces arrested her at dawn on the next day (17 April) and took her to an undisclosed location.

Authorities in Wadi al-Natroun prison, where Alaa Abdel Fattah is currently held, only allow family visits through a glass partition. For a year and a half, Alaa Abdel Fattah has thus been denied opportunities to see and communicate with his son, who is autistic and nonverbal. Since his transfer to Wadi al-Natroun prison in May 2022, Alaa Abdel Fattah has been denied access to sunlight and fresh air. Authorities are also denying him access to his lawyers and consular visits as well as phone calls to his family. During a family visit in February, Alaa Abdel Fattah expressed extreme frustration about the lack of consular visits by British authorities, despite his and his family's requests. He told his family that the lack of adequate involvement by British authorities might compel him to embark on another hunger strike, after his seven-month strike ended in November 2022.

I urge you to release Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed Baker immediately and unconditionally, as they are detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Pending their release, they must have regular access to their lawyers, families and adequate healthcare and be held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners. Alaa Abdel Fattah must be granted a consular visit without further delay. I also urge your government to ensure that prompt, effective, impartial and independent investigations are launched into Mohamed Baker's and other prisoners' torture and other ill-treatment in Badr 1 prison with a view of bringing those responsible to justice in fair trials, and that his wife Neama Hisham is immediately and unconditionally released, as she is being punished solely for publicly speaking out about his assault.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Alaa Abdel Fattah, a well-known political activist and government critic, has been repeatedly arrested in the past decade including for his role in the 2011 uprising. Mohamed Baker is a human rights lawyer and director of Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which he founded in 2014. Mohamed Baker and Alaa Abdel Fattah have been detained since 29 September 2019 pending investigations into bogus terrorism-related charges under Case No.1356/2019 of the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP), a branch of the Public Prosecution specialized in investigating national security threats. The SSSP opened investigations into similar charges against them under new Case No. 1228/2021 as part of a strategy increasingly used by the authorities, referred to as "rotation", to circumvent the two-year limit for pre-trial detention allowed under Egyptian law and to indefinitely extend the detention of activists. Their trial in Case No. 1228/2021 started on 28 October 2021, together with another defendant: blogger and activist Mohamed Ibrahim Radwan "Oxygen", who was also convicted on charges of "spreading false news" in relation to social media posts and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Proceedings before emergency courts are inherently unfair as their verdicts are not subject to appeal by a higher tribunal. Defence lawyers were prevented from communicating with defendants in private and photocopying the casefiles and indictments. On 3 January 2022, the president ratified the verdict against all three. A document seen by Amnesty International indicated that the sentence commenced from the date of ratification, rather than from the date of their arrests.

Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed Baker were held in inhumane conditions at the Tora Maximum Security 2 Prison, in Cairo from September 2019 to May and October 2022, respectively. Prison authorities held them in small, poorly ventilated cells and have denied them beds and mattresses. The prison authorities also denied them reading materials, exercise in the prison yard, adequate clothing, radios, watches, access to hot water and any personal belongings, including family photos. On 12 May 2022, Alaa Abdel Fattah told his mother that he was beaten while handcuffed by the deputy prison warden at Tora Maximum Security 2 prison. On 18 May 2022, he was transferred to Wadi al-Natrun Prison after significant public pressure. On 2 October 2022, Mohamed Baker was transferred to Badr 1 prison, where prisoners complain about being under constant camera surveillance and bombarded with fluorescent lights. Due to the frequent closure of the prison canteen and the well-documented failure of the authorities to provide basic necessities to prisoners, he is at times forced to drink unhygienic tap water and does not have sufficient nutritious food. Prison officials also periodically deny him reading material and letters from family and friends without explanation. Prison authorities are banning them from any phone calls, which contravenes Egypt's obligations under international human rights law as well as Article 38 of Law 38 396/1956 on Prisons.

Since the President's reactivation of the Presidential Pardons Committee in April 2022, the Egyptian authorities released high-profile prisoners of conscience and hundreds of others held for political reasons. However, thousands remain arbitrarily detained solely for exercising their human rights, or following grossly unfair trials, or without legal basis. Before the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27), hundreds were arrested and ordered into pre-detention pending investigations in connection to their calls for peaceful protests on 11 November. During COP27, a chorus of voices called on the Egyptian authorities to release Alaa Abdel Fattah who was on hunger strike for seven months when the event started on 6 November 2022. For instance, on 8 November, [expressing](#) deep regret at his ongoing detention, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, called for his immediate release and urged the authorities to provide him with the necessary healthcare. Alaa Abdel Fattah began his hunger strike on 2 April 2022 to protest his unjust imprisonment and denial of consular visits. On 1 November 2022, he escalated his hunger strike and stopped consuming the 100 calories he had been consuming since April and on 6 November 2022 he stopped drinking water. On 11 November 2022, Alaa Abdel Fattah lost consciousness in the shower, and when he regained it, he was held by a cellmate, surrounded by a large crowd and had a tube inserted into his body. Following this near-death experience, he decided not to resume his hunger strike immediately, but vowed to continue if "there continues to be no real movement on his case".

On 24 March 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee [published](#) its concluding observations on Egypt's compliance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights highlighting several issues raised since 2013 by Amnesty International and other Egyptian and international human rights groups, including arbitrary detention and abuse of counterterrorism legislation to silence actual or perceived critics of the Egyptian authorities.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 June 2023

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Alaa Abdel Fattah (he/him), Mohamed Baker (he/him), Neama Hisham (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6235/2022/en/>