

# Egypt: fresh appeal for UK to intervene as Alaa Abdel Fattah reaches 1,000 days in jail



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UK

UK should demand consular access to Wadi el-Natroun prison and insist on his release

‘The Egyptian authorities know that Alaa is a symbol of resistance and freedom in Egypt’ - Amna Guellali

‘I am carrying my brother’s hunger strike with my body’ - Mona Seif

Amnesty International has renewed its call on the UK government to press for the release of the arbitrarily-jailed UK national Alaa Abdel Fattah, who will have been behind bars in Egypt for 1,000 days tomorrow (25 June).

Abdel Fattah and his lawyer Mohamed Baker, also a prominent human rights activist, were arrested in September 2019, and in December 2021 they were sentenced by Egypt’s Emergency State Security Court to five and four years in prison respectively for “spreading false news”.

Abdel Fattah obtained British citizenship in last year through his British-born mother, and requested a consular visit from UK officials in December. The Egyptian authorities have failed to respond. He has filed several complaints of torture and other ill-treatment, including being beaten while handcuffed for requesting outdoor exercise.

Amnesty is urging the Egyptian authorities to release the two men immediately and unconditionally, and also wants to see the UK authorities using all means at their disposal to visit

Abdel Fattah in prison and secure his release. Earlier this week, the Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said she would intervene in the case, in particular by seeking a meeting with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.

Since 2 April, Abdel Fattah has been on hunger strike - consuming only water and salt - in protest at his unjust detention, inhumane prison conditions and the prison authorities' refusal to grant him consular access. As his health deteriorates, his family have become increasingly concerned for his life. Earlier this month his sister, Mona Seif, who is also an activist, began a hunger strike in solidarity with her brother.

On 9 June, Abdel Fattah's current lawyer, Khaled Ali, posted on Facebook that he had been denied access to his client despite having official permission to visit. The National Council for Human Rights, Egypt's national human rights institution, was unable to see Abdel Fattah during a visit to Wadi el-Natroun prison where he has been held since 18 May. They quoted prison officials' claims that he was not on hunger strike, that he is receiving daily meals and that his "vital signs are normal".

In recent months, scores of unjustly-detained people in Egypt have been released after the reactivation of a Presidential Pardons Committee, but thousands more continue to languish behind bars and arbitrary arrests have continued unabated.

"When I visited [Alaa] on the 12th of June and saw how much weight he lost and how fragile he looked, I decided that if the Egyptian authorities are working hard on hiding the fact that he is on hunger strike, I am going to join him and use my body as a portal to convey and mirror his hunger strike. I am carrying my brother's hunger strike with my body, hoping that the British officials I meet recognise the urgency of his situation and intervene on his behalf with the needed urgency and strength."

"Alaa Abdel Fattah has now endured 1,000 days in detention, where prison and security officials have subjected him to a catalogue of human rights violations - including torture and

other ill-treatment - in reprisal for his prominent role in the 2011 revolution. “The Egyptian authorities know that Alaa is a symbol of resistance and freedom in Egypt and the wider region, and his continued unjust imprisonment sends a chilling message to other activists. “After more than 80 days of hunger strike, Alaa Abdel Fattah’s situation is now entering a critical phase, both psychologically and physically. The Egyptian authorities are responsible for Alaa Abdel Fattah’s life and they must immediately release him. “While Egyptian authorities remain set on silencing dissent and locking up activists, the UK government must ramp up the pressure and should publicly and privately call for his release, and in the meantime secure a consular visit.”

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