

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED LAWYER QUESTIONED OVER TERRORISM CHARGES

On 30 August 2020, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) interrogated lawyer **Mohamed el-Baqer** over unfounded charges, including "joining a terrorist organisation", as part of a recently opened case (No.855/2020). Mohamed el-Baqer is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for his human rights work.

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 my concerns about the ongoing arbitrary detention of lawyer **Mohamed el-Baqer** and activist **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, who have been held at the Tora Maximum Security 2 Prison since 1 October 2019. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights.

On 30 August 2020, Mohamed el-Baqer was brought in front of the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP), a special branch of the Public Prosecution responsible for prosecuting crimes that relate to "state security", to face questioning into a new case (No. 855/2020). During the interrogation, he was accused of "joining a terrorist organization" and "taking part in a criminal agreement to commit a terrorist crime", allegedly committed while he was exercising in the prison courtyard and during appearances at the prosecution's office. His lawyers argued that the accusations were baseless as he was cut off from the outside world from 10 March to 22 August 2020, when all prison visits were suspended by the authorities citing COVID-19 concerns. His lawyers also noted that he has not been allowed to exercise throughout the duration of his detention. After questioning him, the SSSP ordered his detention for 15 days, pending further investigations.

During their last prison visit on 22 September 2020, relatives learned that Mohamed el-Baqer has been suffering from colon spasms and has received health care inside prison. On 28 September 2020, Alaa Abdel Fattah's detention was renewed in his presence for another 45 days. Since prison visits resumed on 22 August 2020, his relatives have been able to visit him twice, last on 1 October.

Shortly after their arrest on 29 September 2019, the police had blindfolded both men on the way to the prison, beat and kicked Alaa Abdel Fattah and insulted Mohamed el-Baqer.

I therefore urge you to release Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed el-Baqer immediately and unconditionally and drop the charges against them, as they are detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Pending their release, I call on you to ensure they have access to adequate health care and regular access to their families and lawyers. I also ask you to ensure that their complaints of torture and other ill-treatment are duly investigated.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamed el-Baqer and Alaa Abdel Fattah have been detained since 29 September 2019 as part of Case No.1356/2019. They are subjected to investigations into charges of “joining a terrorist group”, “funding a terrorist group”, “disseminating false news undermining national security” and “us[ing] social media to commit a publishing offense”. Their detention came amid the largest arrest campaign since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power in 2014.

On 29 March 2019, Alaa Abdel Fattah was released on probation after serving an unjust five-year prison term for participating in a peaceful protest. His probation terms required him to spend 12 hours every night at a police station for five years. On 29 September 2019, Alaa Abdel Fattah did not leave the Dokki police station in Cairo, where he spent his probation. The police told his mother that he was taken by National Security Agency (NSA) officers to the SSSP. Later that day, Mohamed el-Baqer entered the SSSP building to represent him. According to their families and friends, Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed el-Baqer’s whereabouts were unknown until on 1 October 2019, when they appeared at Tora Maximum Security Prison 2. Since their arrest, Mohamed el-Baqer and Alaa Abdel Fattah have been banned from receiving books, exercising, having a radio, mattresses and hot water.

On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke across Egyptian cities, calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. Amnesty International has [documented](#) how Egyptian security forces carried-out sweeping arrests of peaceful protesters, journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests. The authorities ordered the pre-trial detention of at least 3,715 people pending investigations on “terrorism”-related charges in the largest single protests-related criminal investigation in Egypt’s history.

In September 2020, small and scattered protests took place in several villages, towns and poor urban communities in Egypt, where protesters took to the streets against the government’s policy of demolishing unregistered houses and a law on reconciliation for unregistered houses. Some protestors also voiced chants against President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and protested the killing of one man during a police raid in Luxor governorate. The Egyptian security forces used teargas, batons, birdshot and on at least one occasion live ammunition to disperse the protests. According to information collected by the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms and the Egyptian Front for Human Rights, human rights groups, between 10 and 29 September 2020 Egyptian security forces arrested between 571 and 735 individuals in 17 governorates, all detained pending investigations on flawed “terrorism” and protest related charges.

In recent months, 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. In addition to Mohamed el-Baqer, the new case (No. 855/2020) opened by the SSSP also 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 Mahienour el-Masry and journalists Solafa Magdy and Esraa Abdelfattah. According to information gathered by Amnesty International, prosecutors have based accusations against them mainly on NSA investigations case files, which defendants and their lawyers were not allowed to examine.

Alaa Abdel Fattah, a well-known political activist and government critic, has been repeatedly arrested in recent years including for his role in the 2011 uprising. Mohamed el-Baqer is a human rights lawyer and director of Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which he founded in 2014. The organization focuses on criminal justice, the right to education and students’ rights.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: *14 December 2020.*

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) and Mohamed el-Baqer (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2393/2020/en/

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

President Abdelfatah al-Sisi: @AlsisiOfficial
Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: @MfaEgypt
Ministry of Interior: Twitter: @moiegy

And copies to:

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