

# URGENT ACTION

## PROMINENT ACTIVIST AND HIS LAWYER DETAINED

On 29 September 2019, National Security officers arrested prominent activist Alaa Abdel Fattah from his probation cell in Dokki police station in Cairo. Later that day human rights lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer, was arrested at the State Security Prosecution while attending the investigation session of Alaa Abdel Fattah. On 1 October 2019, Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed el-Baqer appeared in Tora Maximum Security prison 2 for the first time after their arrest.

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

*Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi*  
Office of the Public Prosecutor  
Madinat al-Rehab  
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt  
Fax: +202 2577 4716

Dear Counsellor,

On 29 September 2019, **Alaa Abdel Fattah** did not leave the Dokki police station in Cairo, where he spends 12 hours of probation daily. The police told his mother that he was taken by the National Security Agency (NSA) officers to the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP). Later that day, **Mohamed el-Baqer**, one of Alaa Abdel Fattah's lawyers, entered the SSSP building to represent him. He was informed of an arrest warrant against him and was then detained and questioned in the same case. Both men were assigned to Case 1356/2019 and held on four unfounded charges of "joining an illegal organization", "receiving foreign funding", "spreading false news", and "misusing social media". On 9 October 2019, the Supreme State Security Prosecution renewed their detention for 15 days. Mohamed el-Baqer's family visited him for 5 minutes while Alaa's family members were not allowed to visit him.

The police had blindfolded both men on the way to the prison and kept beating and kicking Alaa Abdel Fattah and insulting Mohamed el-Baqer as they entered the prison. When he arrived, prison guards ordered to strip Alaa to his underwear, then several policemen assaulted him. In the cell, prison guards would open the door of Alaa's cell and order him to face the wall and threaten and insult him. Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed el-Baqer's belongings, including their clothes, have been confiscated by the prison guards. An NSA officer also threatened Alaa that if he tells the prosecutor about the torture that they subjected Alaa to, they would torture him even further.

Amnesty International considers that the arrest and the investigation of Mohamed el-Baqer stems from his work as a human rights lawyer and that of Alaa Abdel Fattah stems from his activism and criticism of the government. Their detention is a violation of their right to freedom of expression.

**I therefore ask you to release Mohamed el-Baqer and Alaa Abdel Fattah immediately and drop the charges on which they are being investigated. I call on you to also ensure that - pending their release - they are granted access to their lawyers and family, and that they are protected from torture, other ill-treatment and inhumane conditions of detention by opening an investigation into the torture of Alaa Abdel Fattah and bringing all those responsible to justice. I finally urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately release all those detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The detention of Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed el-Baqer comes amidst the largest arrest campaign since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's access to power in 2014. On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke across Egyptian cities, calling on President al-Sisi to resign. The protests are believed to have been sparked by corruption allegations shared by former army contractor Mohamad Ali who has accused army leaders and the president of wasting public money on building luxury properties.

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 for the first time since their arrest in Tora Maximum Security prison 2. The questioning focused on Mohamed el-Baqer's work and the prosecutor did not provide any evidence against him except an NSA investigation file, which neither him nor his lawyer were allowed to examine.

Amnesty International has documented how the Egyptian security forces have carried out sweeping arrests of protesters, rounded up journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, protesters and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests from taking place. This included 76 arrests across six cities between 19 and 29 September 2019. The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms reported that at least 2,300 have been arrested in relation to the protests. According to lawyers, scores of detainees have been released without questioning, but many others continue to appear before prosecutors. The government has also added the BBC and Alhurra news to the list of 513 other websites already blocked in Egypt and disrupted online messaging applications to thwart further protests.

Alaa Abdel Fattah, a well-known political activist and government critic, was sentenced on 23 February 2015 to five years in prison based on a tweet in which he criticized the judiciary as "biased" and implied that judges are "taking orders from the military". The tweet was in relation to a controversial 2013 [trial](#) in which 43 NGO workers were sentenced to between one and five years in prison. Alaa was released on 29 March 2019 after serving a five-year prison sentence. He has an additional five years of probation which requires him to turn himself in to the Dokki police station every night from 6pm to 6am.

Mohamed el-Baqer is a human rights lawyer and director of Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms which he founded in 2014. The center focuses on criminal justice, education and students' rights. In 2017, el-Baqer received a six-month protective fellowship for Human Rights Defenders at the University of York in the UK.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 22 November 2019

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Alaa Abdel Fattah (he/him) and Mohamed el-Baqer (he/him)