

URGENT ACTION

POLITICIAN'S SON UNJUSTLY JAILED FOR A DECADE

Anas al-Beltagy has been arbitrarily detained for over a decade solely due to his family affiliation. Since his arrest in December 2013, the Egyptian authorities have subjected him to a catalogue of human rights violations including enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment. Since his transfer to the 10th of Ramadan Prison on 8 June 2023, he has been held in prolonged solitary confinement and denied any prison visits. His only contact with the outside world is through his appearances via video link at his pre-trial detention renewal hearings. During his last hearing held in November 2023, he was interrupted by the judge and his audio was muted while he was complaining about his treatment and prison conditions, raising further concerns about his wellbeing. He must be immediately and unconditionally released.

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

President Abdelfattah al-Sisi

Office of the President

Al Ittihadia Palace

Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg; X: @AlsisiOfficial

Your Excellency,

Anas al-Beltagy, 30, has been arbitrarily detained for over 10 years solely because he is the son of prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader and former parliamentarian Mohamed al-Beltagy. Despite courts acquitting him of all charges in four separate cases and a judge's decision to provisionally release him in a fifth case, he continues to be held in pre-trial detention pending investigations into a separate sixth case on similar spurious terrorism-related accusations. Since his arrest in December 2013, Anas al-Beltagy has been subjected to a catalogue of human rights violations including enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment through beatings, prolonged solitary confinement and deliberate denial of healthcare.

As Anas al-Beltagy has been banned from any prison visits and other communication since 2017, his family and lawyers only have limited information about him, obtained during detention renewal hearings or through other prisoners. They have learned that since his transfer to the 10th of Ramadan prison, in Sharkiya governorate, on 8 June 2023, he has been held in solitary confinement and banned from exercising outdoors or interacting with other prisoners. During his last pretrial detention renewal hearing held via video link in November 2023, the judge interrupted him and his audio was muted as he was complaining about his ongoing unjust detention, poor prison conditions, denial of visitations rights, and restrictions on obtaining books and other reading material. Since September 2023, some prisoners held for political reasons in the 10th of Ramadan Prison refused to attend online pretrial detention renewal hearings in protest at their inability to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention and violations of their fair trial rights including the right to adequate defence. During online hearings, defence lawyers are present in the courtroom with the judges, while the defendant is connected from a room in the prison in the presence of security officials. Lawyers frequently complain of technical problems during online hearings, including poor connectivity and their inability to adequately hear defendants.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that Anas al-Beltagy is immediately and unconditionally released and all charges against him are dropped as they are brought solely because of his family links and the exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners and granted regular access to his family, lawyers and adequate healthcare.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces first arrested then 20-year-old Anas al-Beltagy on 24 December 2013 during a visit with his mother to the Tora Prison Complex to see his detained father, Mohamed al-Beltagy. According to information gathered by Amnesty International, security forces surrounded and beat them, before transferring them to the Maadi prosecution where they were interrogated over accusations of assaulting prison guards. The prosecution ordered their provisional release on bail after about twenty hours of detention.

On 31 December 2013, Anas al-Beltagy was arrested from a friend's house in Nasr City neighbourhood of Cairo. He was taken to Nasr City 1 Police Station, where police officers refused to acknowledge his detention and forcibly disappeared him for nearly a month, during which he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International learned from informed sources that security forces held him in a small iron cage, described as "unfit for humans". After his transfer to Abu Zaabal prison in Alexandria in early 2014, the prison administration held him in prolonged solitary confinement and forced him to sleep on the bare concrete floor. He was subsequently transferred to the Tora Prison Complex, south of Cairo, where he continued to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement. He was transferred to the Badr Prison Complex in November 2022.

He has been held in cruel and inhuman prison conditions, violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. In Badr Prison, where he was detained from November 2022 to June 2023, he was held in solitary confinement in a freezing cell with fluorescent lights switched on 24 hours a day, not permitted any exercise outdoors and denied any contact with other prisoners. Since his transfer to 10th of Ramadan prison on 8 June 2023, he was also placed in solitary confinement. Prison officials continue to ban his family from bringing him any food, climate-appropriate clothes, and medicine, despite well-documented patterns of prison authorities failing to provide those in their custody with sufficient food, potable water, basic items for personal hygiene, adequate clothing and bedding.

During his pre-trial detention renewal hearings, which have been held remotely via video link since 2022, and in which he sometimes appears with his hands and legs cuffed, he complained about the deterioration of his physical and mental health and psychological condition due to his detention conditions. Such hearings erode fair trial standards and take place under coercive circumstances in the presence of prison guards and detainees are prevented from communicating privately with their lawyers. Further, they expose detainees to risks of reprisals from guards for complaining about torture or other ill-treatment and impede the ability of judges to spot visible bruises or other injuries. Lawyers also frequently complain of technical problems during online hearings, including poor connectivity and their inability to adequately hear defendants. Anas al-Baltagy's lawyers also reported not seeing him on camera during some scheduled detention renewal hearings, but had no confirmation whether he present in the room. His lawyers said that the judge presiding over his detention renewal hearings has dismissed and failed to address his repeated complaints about his ill-treatment, prompting Anas al-Beltagy to request for the hearings on the renewal of his pre-trial detention to be brought in front of a different judge.

Security forces have long targeted the family of Mohamed al-Beltagy, leading several to flee Egypt. Security forces killed Asma al-Beltagy, Anas al-Beltagy's sister, aged 16 at the time of her death, during their violent dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in on 14 August 2013, which left some 900 dead. No security or military official has been held accountable for the unlawful lethal use of force to date, while authorities rounded up thousands of actual or suspected members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 March 2024

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Anas al-Beltagy (he, his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7089/2023/en/>