URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO IMPRISONMENT

On 3 June 2026, the New Cairo Misdemeanour Court sentenced prominent activist and writer Ahmed Douma to one year in prison with labour on charges of spreading "false news". These charges stem from his article, published on 25 March 2026 by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, about the impact of unjust imprisonment on state stability, as well as from a social media post published on 29 March 2026 concerning detention conditions in Egypt. His appeal in front of New Cairo Misdemeanours Appeal Court is scheduled for 25 June 2026 . He must be immediately and unconditionally released as he is arbitrarily detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression.

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

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Your Excellency,

I write to express my grave concern over the arbitrary detention and unfair trial of writer and prominent activist Ahmed Douma. On 3 June 2026, the New Cairo Misdemeanour Court sentenced him to one year in prison with labour in Case No. 2449 of 2026 on charges of "publishing false news and statements inside and outside the country with the intent to disturb public peace and spread panic". These charges stem from his social media posts and an article he wrote about unjust imprisonment and cruel detention conditions. The conviction followed an unfair trial in which the defence was not permitted to call or question witnesses in support of his defence and faced delays in accessing his case file. Ahmed Douma was not brought before the court despite having been transferred to the courthouse on the day the verdict was issued. On 25 June 2026, the New Cairo Misdemeanours Appeal Court will examine his appeal against his unjust conviction.

During a prison visit on 7 June 2026, Ahmed Douma informed his family that he had experienced heart-related health issues. According to his family, 10th of Ramadan prison authorities transferred him to the prison's medical clinic, where he underwent medical examinations, including electrocardiograms (ECGs), on two occasions. The family is seeking to obtain his medical record to share them with independent medical specialists. Concerns over interference by the prison administration in his healthcare mounted after Ahmed Douma told his family that during the first ECG examination, the doctor was called away to speak with the prison warden and subsequently informed him that he had no cardiac condition. However, following a second examination, another doctor reportedly diagnosed him with an irregular heartbeat and prescribed medication. According to his family, Ahmed Douma experienced similar symptoms during his previous imprisonment prior to his release in 2023, particularly during periods of severe stress.

Ahmed Douma informed his family that he had access to food, medication and a two hours of daily exercise. However, he is held in a ward with only two other prisoners ; his movement outside his cell is subject to strict restrictions to prevent interaction with other prisoners. The family raised concerns about him being continuously exposed to intense light in his cell. The family also criticized the restriction limiting Ahmed Douma to one family visit per month - an exceptional measure introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic that remains in force - and called for more regular family visits.

I urge you to ensure that Ahmed Douma is immediately and unconditionally released and that all charges against him are dropped, as he is arbitrarily detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, ensure he has regular access to his family and lawyers, and is held in conditions that meet international standards and receives adequate care in line with medical ethics.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Douma is an Egyptian poet, writer and activist who has been targeted due to his political activism and leading role in the 25 January 2011 revolution, as well as his vocal criticism of successive Egyptian governments. Security forces arrested Douma, then aged 25, on 12 January 2012 in relation to his participation in the "Cabinet Offices" sit-in. He was released after three months, but re-arrested on 3 December 2013 amid a wave of arrests after enactment of the draconian protest law (Law No. 107/2013) restricting the right to peaceful assembly. Throughout his detention he has been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, including deliberate denial of access to medical care, and he was held in solitary confinement for four years and eight months in total for prolonged periods of time, between December 2013 until January 2020. Douma suffered from severe pain in different parts of his body as a result of being confined to his cell for more than 22 hours a day in poor prison conditions. He has knee and back pain resulting from the lack of movement and the failure to provide him with a bed, and sometimes even a mattress, in his solitary confinement cell. He also suffered from high blood pressure, insomnia, constant headaches, severe depression, and panic attacks. In February 2015, he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in relation to his participation in anti-government protests following a grossly unfair and politically motivated trial intended to punish him for his activism. In July 2020, the Court of Cassation, Egypt's highest court, upheld his conviction and sentence. On 19 August 2023, he was released following a presidential pardon, after spending around 10 years in prison.

Since his release, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) questioned Ahmed Douma in seven separate cases related to content posted on his social media accounts, under accusations of "spreading false news" deemed to "disturb public order, spread fear and harm public interest". In the first six cases, he was released on bail, exceeding a total of 235,000 Egyptian pounds (4,500 USD), pending investigations. This forms part of a broader pattern of restrictive measures imposed on him since his release, including an arbitrary travel ban and restrictions on enrolment in postgraduate studies.

On 6 April 2026, he went for questioning at the SSSP in response to a summons he had received a few days earlier. Several hours into the interrogation, his lawyers were informed that he was being accused of "publishing false news and statements inside and outside the country with the intent to disturb public peace and spread panic". The charges relate to an article he wrote, published in Al-Araby Al-Jadeed on 25 March 2026, under the title "From a prison within the state to a state within the prison", criticizing unjust imprisonment and its impact on state stability. The charges also stem from a social media post, published on 29 March 2026, in which he criticized detention conditions in Egyptian prisons. On 9 April 2026, an Advisory Chamber ordered the renewal of his pretrial detention for 15 days after the prosecution argued that he posed a risk of absconding, tampering with evidence, or harming public order. His lawyers argued that Ahmed Douma has known places of residence and has appeared voluntarily when summoned in the past. They also argued that the Egyptian Constitution limits the use of detention in cases related to publications. Egypt is a state party of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression.

Egyptian authorities have demonstrated a persistent lack of tolerance for actual or perceived dissent, targeting journalists, activists, lawyers, opposition politicians and other individuals who criticize government policies or denounce the authorities' widespread human rights violations. Amnesty International has documented repeated waves of arrests and prosecutions of people solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Those detained in politically motivated cases are frequently subjected to prolonged arbitrary detention, including extended pretrial detention renewed automatically by prosecutors and judges without meaningful judicial review. Amnesty International has also repeatedly raised concerns about systematic violations of fair trial rights in Egypt, particularly in cases of a political nature, including the right to a lawyer of one's choosing particularly during the initial questioning by the police, the right to adequate defence, the right not to self-incriminate and to presumption of innocence, the right to a fair and public hearing before a competent, impartial and independent tribunal, and the right to be protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 August 2026
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ahmed Douma (He/Him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0925/2026/en/