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Egypt: Arbitrary arrest of Ahmed Douma amid continuous judicial harassment

On 20 January 2026, human rights defender **Ahmed Douma**, was arrested without a warrant from his home in Cairo, interrogated for more than 12 hours and later released on bail set at 100,000 Egyptian pounds (approximately €1812).

[Ahmed Douma](#) is a prominent Egyptian human rights defender, journalist, poet and writer who became a symbol of resistance during the 2011 uprising. His activism began in 2009, when he was arrested, tortured, and sentenced to one year in prison by a military court for joining a peaceful solidarity mission to Gaza. After years of severe repression, judicial harassment and imprisonment for his human rights work, the defender was released from detention in August 2023. Since then, despite facing significant restrictions, Ahmed Douma has continued to defend the exercise of fundamental rights in Egypt. He publishes articles, videos and social media content, primarily exposing the dire reality of prison conditions in Egypt. The defender also organised peaceful protests in front of the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate, calling for an end to the siege on Gaza and condemning the genocide of the Palestinian people.

On 20 January 2026, National Security officers entered Ahmed Douma's home in El Mokattam in Cairo, and arrested him without identifying themselves or presenting a warrant. He was detained and interrogated for 12 hours at the National Security Agency premises in Cairo. The human rights defender was restrained and blindfolded for hours, subjected to repeated assaults, and denied basic necessities, including a blanket in cold conditions. These acts caused severe distress and injury to his wrist and eyes.

During the arrest, all of the human rights defender's electronic devices and personal belongings were confiscated, including two mobile phones, a laptop, an iPad, storage devices, books, papers, bank cards, an electricity payment card, house keys and his journalist press card. It has been reported to Front Line Defenders that this seizure took place without an inventory, and that only some items were selectively presented to the prosecution.

Ahmed Douma was charged by the prosecution, under the authority of the Public Ministry, with 'spreading false information' and 'misleading public opinion in Egypt and abroad,' in connection with an investigative article he published on the detention conditions of political activist, Mohamed Adel, and an AI-generated [video](#) depicting Mohamed Adel's testimony about his prison conditions.

Serious procedural violations regarding his most recent prosecution have been reported, including the fabrication of claims that Ahmed Douma refused to receive a summons or appear before the prosecution. These false claims were used by the prosecution to retroactively justify his arrest. Ahmed Douma was released on bail set at 100,000 Egyptian pounds (approximately €1812). The case remains ongoing despite requests by the human rights defender and his lawyers to have his testimony heard as a victim of illegal arrest and ill-treatment.

This incident constitutes the seventh [arrest](#) of Ahmed Douma since his release in 2023 and reflects a sustained pattern of judicial harassment, including the travel ban imposed on him. On 28 July 2025, the human rights defender was summoned by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) for the third time in recent months, interrogated and charged with 'spreading false news',

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'disturbing public peace', 'causing confusion' and 'inciting fear among citizens'. These charges are vaguely defined and commonly used in Egypt to criminalise peaceful expression. Later, the defender was released on bail set at 50,000 Egyptian pounds (approximately €900). Neither he nor his lawyers were informed of the charges prior to the interrogation, raising serious concerns about due process and the fairness of the proceedings.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the repeated arrests, ill-treatment and ongoing judicial harassment of Ahmed Douma. The organisation believe that the continuous targeting and harassment of Ahmed Douma is directly linked to his legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders reiterates its previous concern regarding the increasing use of prohibitively high bail amounts which appear to be a deliberate move to exert financial pressure on human rights defenders, in order to silence dissent.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Drop all charges against Ahmed Douma and cease all forms of judicial harassment;
2. Immediately return all of his confiscated devices and personal belongings;
3. Establish an independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of ill-treatment and procedural violations and hold those responsible to account;
4. Guarantee that all human rights defenders in Egypt can carry out their work without the fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.

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