

Egypt's Answer to Unjust Detentions is More Arrests

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Families, Lawyers, Former Detainees, and Journalists All Targets

In a living-room-sized hall of a political party's Cairo headquarters, family members of prisoners [gathered](#) around a photo exhibition on May 12. There, they shared grievances and called on [Egyptian](#) authorities to release their loved ones.

In the days that followed, the National Security Agency [summoned several](#) of the families for interrogation and detained a number of the event's organizers. Three of the organizers—lawyers Wafaa el-Masry and Mohamed Abu el-Diar and activist Hanan Tantawy—were detained on May 25 and accused with “publishing false news,” provisions frequently used to silence and detain peaceful critics. While the Supreme State Security Prosecution [released](#) Tantawy and el-Masry on bail after lengthy interrogations, Abu el-Diar remains in detention and faces the additional charge of “joining a terrorist organization.”

While widespread and abusive detention has become one of the country's most pressing human rights and political issues, affecting tens of thousands of families, the authorities' apparent response has been more detentions. Examples are plenty.

On April 6, activist Ahmed Douma, who spent 10 years in prison and was released in 2023 pursuant to a presidential pardon, was [re-arrested](#) for [writing an article](#) on abusive detention conditions he witnessed. He was convicted and [sentenced](#) to one year in prison on June 3.

Authorities [arrested](#) Sayed Moshagheb, a [former leader](#) of the [feared football ultras](#) group, on April 16, just hours after he was released from 11 years in detention. Authorities reportedly used [videos](#) showing a small, spontaneous celebration in front of his home to charge Moshagheb and five of his acquaintances with obstructing a public road and rioting. They remain detained without trial.

Officials have offered meager, inconsistent initiatives aimed at addressing the crisis. [Presidential pardons](#) for some prisoners and public prosecution release orders for some who have spent years in detention without trial bring small measure of hope every now and then. However, these are exceptions to the norm: authorities arrest people—and even re-arrest some—on a near-daily basis as security services target the slightest forms of political dissent or social nonconformity, from journalists doing their job and human rights activists organizing to [women dancing on TikTok](#).

Despite the government's promises of reform, this vicious cycle continues, exacting a heavy toll on people's safety and livelihoods amid the most prolonged human rights crisis

in the country's recent history.

