

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL JOINT STATEMENT

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# EGYPT: GLOBAL COALITION CALLS FOR RELEASE OF DETAINED EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER MOHAMED BAKER

On the occasion of lawyer Mohamed Baker's 41st birthday, we, the undersigned organizations, urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release him and strike his name from the "terrorist list."

Mohamed Baker is a human rights lawyer and the founder and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms. He has been arbitrarily detained for more than 21 months without charge or trial, simply for his human rights work. Baker has a long history of defending individuals whose rights have been violated, including civilians tried before military courts, protesters, and members of marginalized communities, including religious and ethnic minorities. The organization he founded focuses on criminal justice, the right to education, and minority rights.

On 29 September 2019, Baker was arrested while representing his client, imprisoned human rights activist and blogger Alaa Abdelfattah, who was detained and being interrogated by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP). During Abdelfattah's questioning, a prosecutor informed Baker that he too was under arrest pending investigations into unfounded accusations of "joining a terrorist group," "funding a terrorist group," "disseminating false news undermining national security," and "us[ing] social media to commit a publishing offense" in Case No. 1356/2019.

Nearly one year later, on 30 August 2020, Baker was brought in for questioning and added to Case No. 855/2020 on nearly identical charges, in a practice by Egyptian authorities commonly known as "rotation." This new case includes other arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and activists such as blogger Mohamed "Oxygen," journalist Esraa Abdel Fattah, and activist Mahienour El-Masry.

Then, on 23 November 2020, the Official Gazette published the decision of the Cairo Criminal Court to include Baker on the "terrorists list" for five years as a part of an entirely different case, No. 1781/2019. As a result of this designation, Baker is subject to a travel ban, his assets are frozen, and he is prohibited from engaging in political or civic work for five years. In all three cases, Baker has been denied due process, including the right to present a defense and challenge the lawfulness of his detention, or in Case No. 1781/2019, even be informed that he was under investigation.

The news about Baker's "terrorists list" designation coincided with the announcement by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) that Baker and six other imprisoned Egyptian lawyers had been awarded the 2020 Human Rights Award.

The fact that Baker was arrested while representing his client and that he faces the same charges as his client, thus being identified with his client's case, is contrary to Principle 18 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and shows the severity of the crackdown on human rights lawyers in Egypt. Attacks against lawyers have escalated in recent years and have included instances of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, and numerous forms of harassment and intimidation.

Mohamed Baker is detained at Tora Maximum Security Two prison, notorious for its cruel and inhuman conditions, such as lack of clean water, poor ventilation, and overcrowding. Prison authorities have denied Baker a bed and mattress, outdoor exercise, access to books, a clock, a mirror, and family photos. As a result, his mental and physical health have been deteriorating. The authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Baker, who, like countless other lawyers,

human rights defenders, journalists, politicians, and social media influencers have been targeted solely for their legitimate and peaceful activities, exercising their fundamental rights, and defending the rights of others.

## **SIGNATURES**

- Amnesty International
- Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales
- Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)
- Euromed Rights
- FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- Freedom House
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- MENA Rights Group
- Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
- The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
- The Freedom Initiative
- The Law Society of England and Wales
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- University of York
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders