

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION POLITICIAN'S HEALTH DETERIORATING

Former presidential candidate, founder and president of the political party, Misr Al-Qawia, Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh, aged 71, has suffered four heart attacks in July and August 2022. He has been arbitrarily detained since 14 February 2018 in Mazraet Tora Prison, Egypt, over unfounded charges in relation to media interviews and sentenced by an emergency court to 15 years imprisonment on 29 May 2022. The Egyptian authorities must grant his immediate and unconditional release.

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

President Abdelfattah al-Sisi

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Your Excellency,

Former presidential candidate, founder and president of the Misr Al-Qawia political party, **Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh**, aged 71, has been arbitrarily detained since 14 February 2018 in Mazraet Tora Prison, Egypt, over unfounded charges in relation to media interviews he gave that were critical of President Abdelfattah al-Sisi. On 25 August 2021, two months before lifting the state of emergency, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) referred him to trial in front of an Emergency State Security Court (ESSC). On 29 May 2022, the Third Terrorism Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court, acting as an emergency court, sentenced Abdelmoneim Aboufotoh to 15 years in prison for "spreading false news" and "incitement against state institutions".

The Egyptian authorities have subjected Abdelmoneim Aboufotoh to torture by holding him in prolonged solitary confinement for more than four years and deliberately denying him access to adequate healthcare, even though he has a serious and potentially life-threatening health condition. He suffered four heart attacks in July and August 2022. His family said that on 1 July, 6 July and 3 August 2022 the prison authorities transferred him to the poorly equipped prison medical center and provided him with first aid through a medicine that expands the arteries which is not a curative procedure. They refused to share the results of his medical condition with his family and his lawyers. They just informed Abdelmoneim Aboufotoh orally that he suffered a heart attack. Most recently, his family received a letter from him in which he states that he had a fourth heart attack on 25 August 2022. His family said that he requires an emergency scan, ultrasound and catheterization of the arteries that are not available in the prison hospital. He is also in urgent need of prostate surgery as he was scheduled for this prior to his detention. Abdelmoneim Aboufotoh's family stated that he also suffers from episodes of apnea due to poor ventilation and conditions of detention, and he uses a device to regulate his breathing.

Amnesty International considers Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh's prolonged solitary confinement for more than 22 hours a day in abusive conditions since his detention in February 2018, and the deliberate denial of health care, to be in contravention of Egyptian and international law and may amount to torture.

I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh, as his detention is arbitrary and solely based on the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he has access to adequate healthcare and is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh was a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood until he resigned to run for presidency in 2012. He was arrested in February 2018 after giving interviews that were sharply critical of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a month before al-Sisi was re-elected.

Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure and an enlarged prostate, according to medical records predating his detention. The prison administration has routinely delayed or denied his requests for medical assistance inside or outside the prison, and access to his private doctors inside the prison at his own cost. In 2021, the prison administration also refused to transfer him to an external hospital for prostate surgery despite medical advice by his private doctor and his relatives' willingness to cover the costs.

On 8 August 2022, his family submitted a complaint to the National Council for Human Rights, regarding the medical negligence he suffers in detention. They asked that he be given the necessary medical care to preserve his life. In it, they provided a detailed explanation of his health condition and latest developments, and the most urgent medical needs that are not available to him in prison, in order to determine the accurate diagnosis and the necessary course of treatment. They also required his transfer to an external hospital as soon as possible, at the expense of his family. On 9 August 2022, the family submitted a statement to the Public Prosecutor indicating the serious and potentially life-threatening health condition after his exposure to four heart attacks that occurred suddenly, accompanied by severe pain that lasts for longer periods, and without any physical effort before it. The statement mentions his impaired ability to make physical effort, which they surmise indicates a blockage in some of the arteries of the heart.

According to credible sources, he has been detained in Mazraet Tora Prison in solitary confinement in a cell measuring 2m x 3m that is hot in summer and cold in winter and does not have a bed. Until mid-2021, the prison administration has limited his access to exercise to an alley inside the ward for no more than one hour a day. Then he is now allowed to exercise alone for one hour and a half outside of the ward.

On 25 October 2021, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi announced that he would not extend the state of emergency, in force since 2017, which allowed for the creation of ESSCs. Article 19 of the law governing the state of emergency stipulates that ongoing trials are to continue even after the state of emergency is no longer in force. In the three months preceding the decision not to renew the state of emergency, the Egyptian authorities referred at least 26 human rights defenders, activists and opposition politicians to trial before emergency courts. Proceedings in front of ESSCs are inherently unfair. Defendants are denied the right to appeal their convictions and sentences to a higher tribunal. Only the president retains the power to authorize, quash or commute sentences or to order a retrial. Other documented fair trial violations include the right to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of their defence, right to communicate with counsel of their own choosing and right to a public hearing. In addition, judges at the ESSC routinely deny requests by lawyers to photocopy casefiles, which in some cases exceed 2,000 pages, instead instructing them to review them in court. Prosecutors and judges have also failed to provide copies of indictment orders to defendants and their lawyers, undermining their right to be informed of the exact nature and cause of the charges against them.

On 29 May 2022, an ESSC sentenced 25 political opponents, including politician Mohamed al-Kassas to 10 years in prison, after convicting him of trumped-up terrorism-related charges and spreading false news. In recent months, dozens of political opponents and critics have been convicted of bogus charges following grossly unfair trials by ESSCs. Among them are politicians Zyad el-Elaimy who was sentenced in November 2021 to five years in prison, following an unfair trial by an ESSC simply for criticizing Egypt's human rights record and economic policies. Security forces arrested him in June 2019, shortly after he discussed running in the 2020 elections and detained him without trial for over two years.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 27 October 2022

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh (he/his)