

13 March 2023

Egypt: Attorney General urged to immediately release hunger-striking poet Galal El Behairy

To: Attorney General: Hamada El-Sawy

From: Egyptian human rights organizations

A request for urgent action to release Galal El Behairy after he has gone on hunger strike and is refraining from taking his heart and depression medications

The family of poet Galal El Behairy has informed his defense team that since 5 March 2023, he has entered a hunger strike and is refraining from taking his heart and depression medications, posing a grave threat to his life. The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) submitted report no. 15196 of 2023 to the office of the Attorney General on behalf of Galal El Behairy, urging him to open an investigation regarding El Behairy's hunger strike and his refusal to take heart and depression medications. AFTE further demanded the prison hospital urgently provide the necessary medical care to El Behairy, and called for his immediate release from prison, where he has languished over half a decade without having committed any crime.

El Behairy initiated his hunger strike to coincide with the start of his sixth year in prison as a result of exercising his fundamental right to free expression. El Behairy's continued imprisonment represents a violation of articles no. 65, 70, and 71 of the Egyptian constitution, which affirm the right of citizens to freedom of expression, and the inadmissibility of applying a penalty that deprives a person of freedom for crimes committed through publication and publicity, related to freedom of expression.

On 3 March 2018, El Behairy was arrested on charges in two cases. On 17 April 2019, he was conditionally released in the first case, no. 480 of 2018, and referred to a military court for the second case and sentenced to three years in prison, which ended on 31 July 2021. However, the Ministry of Interior failed to implement procedures for El Behairy's release, and he remained illegally detained. The Supreme State Security Prosecution interrogated El Behairy in a new case, no. 2000 of 2021, and he remains in pretrial detention on similar charges related to exercising his right to free expression.

The undersigned organizations call for the immediate transfer of Galal El Behairy from the prison hospital to receive appropriate treatment, and further demand the urgent intervention of the Attorney General towards the prompt release El Behairy, in the interests of preserving his life and safety.

Signatories:

1. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)
2. Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)
3. El Nadeem Center

4. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
5. Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
6. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
7. Committee for Justice