



Briefing – Alaa Abd el-Fattah (23 November 2022)

***Trigger warning* hunger strike**

Suggested questions to the UK government:

- Does the UK government have a clear plan for next steps that they will take to ensure Alaa Abd el-Fattah's immediate and unconditional release and will they share this with Alaa's family?
- What steps is the Foreign Secretary taking to secure a consular visit in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations?
- Will the UK government push for Alaa Abd el-Fattah's to have unimpeded communication with the outside world, including with his family and lawyers?
- Will the Foreign/Trade secretary conduct an urgent human rights impact assessment of its trade, security and other dealings with Egypt in light of the appalling mistreatment of Alaa Abd el-Fattah's and other human rights violations to ensure that no further harm is caused by existing UK-Egyptian agreements?
- Will the UK government push for Alaa Abd el-Fattah's to have access to professional, confidential healthcare at a facility chosen by his family?

Latest information

On 17 November 2022, Alaa's family were finally permitted access to Alaa in prison for the first time since 24 October 2022. While his hunger strike has ended, during the visit the family were told of the horrific ordeal that Alaa had faced during that time. The family have stated that Alaa will have no choice but to resume his hunger strike imminently if there continues to be no real movement on his case.

Alaa's lawyer was not allowed to visit him on three occasions despite having authorization from the Public Prosecutor. We remain deeply concerned of the impact of seven months of a hunger strike on Alaa's physical and mental condition. The concern is all the more salient as prison medical staff are not independent, they are part of the Ministry of Interior, and we fear that decisions over Alaa's health will not be made by independent medical professional in line with medical ethics.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak raised Alaa's case during his visit to Egypt for COP27, however, the UK government have failed to act with sufficient urgency on this case for months and have so far failed to secure any further progress on this case. The family had requested a clear plan from the government on what they are doing to secure Alaa's release for a long time but were never offered any information. The family's requests to meet with the Foreign Secretary were also ignored until Alaa's sister took part in a sit-in outside of the FCDO for 16 days before the meeting was finally agreed. Alaa's release must remain a priority for the government.

The Prime Minister should continue to insist on UK consular access to Alaa to check on his perilous condition and to ascertain what independent medical care he needs. The Government must also conduct an urgent human rights impact assessment of its trade, security and other dealings with Egypt in light of the appalling mistreatment of Alaa and other human rights violations to ensure that no further harm is caused by existing UK-Egyptian agreements. With COP27 over, it's more important than ever that Egypt's cruel treatment of Alaa is robustly challenged and that he's spared any further suffering.

Timeline of events

8 November: Alaa was being pressured to submit to a medical examination so that they could produce a medical report. Alaa stated that he would submit to a medical if it was officially put on record that he was admitted to the Medical Centre and that he was on hunger and water strike. They instead brought plainclothes officers to intimidate him, but he refused to leave the Medical Centre, so a riot squad was brought in to carry him out. As he was being carried out, he had a meltdown and promised to kill himself if he was taken back to the cell. When they put him in the cell he started to smash his head against the wall. He was restrained and tied down. The cell was put on suicide watch.

9 November: Alaa smashed his own head against his cell wall, to force the authorities to file an official report on his case and bring in an investigator.

10 November: The Public Prosecutor sent someone qualitatively different to anyone he'd met before to interview him. He recorded the demands of the hunger strike and what had pushed him to it. On the same day Alaa's mother Laila was not allowed to wait at the prison gates, and her letter to Alaa was refused by prison authorities. Alaa's lawyer was also denied access to the prison despite having a permit.

11 November: Alaa collapsed in the shower as he got out of the shower to get dressed, he fell over and fell unconscious. When he came to, he was surrounded by people and his head was cradled by one of his cellmates and there was a canula in his body which gave him a lactate solution and glucose. Then they gave him electrolyte fluid, a spoonful of honey and a pickle. There were lots of people there and they needed to save his life. He talked about all of this as a near-death experience. His hunger strike was broken. It was at this point that Alaa says he could see then that his wish for the end was getting the better of him and that there was a strong part of him that was ready to die.

12 November: Alaa wrote the short letter to his family saying he's drinking water again and asking for the music player.

14 November: Alaa began to eat of his own will again. They released the letter to us on this day. They allowed in the music player and Alaa heard music for the first time in 3 years. He felt alive again.

17 November: Alaa's family visit him. He was very thin, very frail, but was happy to be back with his family.

Background

[Alaa Abd el-Fattah](#) - who has spent most of the past nine years unlawfully deprived of his liberty - was last arrested in September 2019. He has been denied access to consular officials since acquiring British citizenship in December 2021. On 20 December 2021, Abd el-Fattah, human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker and blogger Mohamed Radwan "Oxygen", were convicted on bogus charges and sentenced to between four and five years following a grossly unfair trial in reprisal for their activism and human rights work. All three are prisoners of conscience, having been solely targeted for their peaceful activism. They are among thousands arbitrarily detained in Egypt for political reasons.

Alaa Abd el-Fattah is a prisoner of conscience who should never have been detained in the first place. Alaa continues to be at high risk whilst in prison and must be released immediately and unconditionally.