

Egyptian journalist Esraa Abdel Fattah arrested on false news charges

Egyptian authorities must immediately release imprisoned journalist Esraa Abdel Fattah, drop all charges against her, and investigate allegations that she was physically abused in state custody, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.



A police van is seen in Alexandria, Egypt, on September 27, 2019. Security forces recently arrested and allegedly tortured journalist Esraa Abdel Fattah. Credit: CPJ/Reuters/Amr Abdallah Dalsh.

On October 13, plainclothes security officers arrested Abdel Fattah, a reporter and social media coordinator for the banned news website *Tahrir News*, while she was driving her car in the Dokki area of Giza, west of Cairo, according to [international](#) and [local](#) news reports and Facebook posts by [Khaled Ali](#) and [Mohamed Salah](#), the journalist's lawyers.

The security officers took Abdel Fattah to an undisclosed location where they beat her, hung her from handcuffs for hours, and choked her with her clothing while demanding she give up her cellphone password, according to Salah and the news reports.

Last night, Egypt's national security prosecutor charged Abdel Fattah with spreading false news, membership in a banned group, and abuse of social media networks, charges which Abdel Fattah denies, and ordered her to be detained for 15 days while an investigation is conducted, according to her lawyers.

"Egyptian authorities must immediately free Esraa Abdel Fattah, drop all charges against her, and conduct a speedy and

transparent investigation into allegations that she was tortured by security forces,” said Middle East and North Africa program coordinator Sherif Mansour. “Abdel Fattah should never have been arrested, let alone subject to the horrific treatment her lawyers say she has received in custody.”

Yesterday, Abdel Fattah showed the national security prosecutor the wounds she said were inflicted by the physical abuse in state custody, and the prosecutor ordered a medical exam to be conducted, according to her lawyers. She also announced yesterday that she would begin a hunger strike to protest her abuse, her lawyers’ Facebook posts said.

The *Tahrir News* website is the online version of the *al-Tahrir* newspaper; the website has been blocked throughout the country since May, according to [CPJ reporting](#) and a *Tahrir News* staffer who confirmed today that the website is still blocked but asked not to be named, saying they were not authorized to speak on the issue. With its website inaccessible in Egypt, the outlet is facing financial insolvency, according to CPJ’s reporting.

Abdel Fattah is a blogger and activist who has written about human rights and opposition groups at the outlet, and Egyptian authorities have surveilled her and banned her from leaving the country since 2016, as [CPJ reported](#) at the time.

The day before her arrest, Abdel Fattah wrote a post on her Twitter account, which has since been suspended, supporting the release of opinion writers who have been imprisoned since protests began in Egypt last month, according to [news reports](#).

CPJ emailed the Egyptian public prosecutor’s office for comment on Abdel Fattah’s arrest and abuse allegations, but did not immediately receive a response. Today, pro-government media outlets such as [Baladna](#) and [Akhbar al-Youm](#) accused Abdel Fattah of lying about the torture and described her as an “agent of chaos for the Muslim Brotherhood.”

Abdel Fattah is one of at least seven [journalists arrested](#) in Egypt amid anti-government protests that began on September 19, according to CPJ reporting.

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