

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE DETAINED FRENCH-EGYPTIAN NATIONAL

French-Egyptian national Dr Amr Abdelfattah has been detained in Saudi Arabia for over two years. He was arrested in June 2024 after performing the Hajj pilgrimage for an invalid visa permit. He was put on trial before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) and learned during trial proceedings he was also being charged with expression-related offences. In August 2026, his lawyer in France learned he had been sentenced to “years” in prison but was not told the specific sentence or basis for conviction. Since his arrest, Saudi authorities have denied him full access to a lawyer, subjected him to repeat bouts of torture and ill-treatment, held him incommunicado, and repeatedly denied him contact with his family. Saudi authorities must immediately release him.

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

Walid bin Mohammad AlSama'ani
Minister of Justice
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Postal Code 11472, P.O Box 7775
Email: 1950@moj.gov.sa

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my grave concern about the ongoing detention and fair trial violations of French-Egyptian telecommunications engineer Dr Amr Abdelfattah, who has been detained in Saudi Arabia since 16 June 2024 after being arrested while performing the Hajj pilgrimage.

Dr Amr Abdelfattah was arrested by Saudi security officials in Mecca, who asked to see his Hajj permit and informed him that the permit he possessed was invalid. His family subsequently told Amnesty International that they had fallen victim to a visa scam, a problem that has affected other pilgrims travelling for Hajj.

When Dr Amr Abdelfattah was brought to trial, almost a year after his arrest, before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), he learned he was also facing a number of speech-related charges, including “insulting the government of the Kingdom”, “insulting the head of a state” and violating the counter-terror law for “praising detained individuals,” none of which are recognizable offences under international law. His family believes these charges are due to comments he made to a police officer following his arrest.

The SCC is notorious for violating due process rights and routinely uses vague provisions under the anti-cybercrime and counter-terror laws that equate peaceful expression with “terrorism”. Amr Abdelfattah has been denied full access to legal representation throughout court proceedings; the majority of hearings took place without the presence of his lawyer or French consular officials. In August 2026, his lawyer in France learned he had been sentenced to “years” in prison. He was not told the specific sentence or basis for conviction.

I am also alarmed by allegations that Amr Abdelfattah has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while detained at Dhahban Central Prison. Prison guards subjected him to beatings, forced him to run with his feet tied, and denied him food. In December 2024, he lost consciousness after being beaten by officers and was taken to the hospital. He has also suffered from severe psychological distress since his arrest.

The Saudi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Amr Abdelfattah. Until then, they must prevent further fair trial rights violations, ensure he has regular access to his family and legal representation and promptly, independently and effectively investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Amr Abdelfattah is a French-Egyptian national, father of three children and a telecommunications engineer and specialist and university professor who has lived in France since 2009. He travelled to Saudi Arabia for the first time in June 2024 to perform the Hajj pilgrimage with his wife.

On 16 June 2024, Dr Amr Abdelfattah was initially detained at the Haram Police Station in Mecca before being transferred the following day to Dhahban Central Prison near Jeddah. According to his lawyer in France, he has been routinely subjected to torture and other ill-treatment throughout his detention, and credible sources reported seeing signs of physical violence on his body. The lawyer in France informed Amnesty International that on 23 August 2024, he was thrown against a wall and threatened with death during an interrogation. On 23 December 2024, he was restrained and beaten by six masked officers, lost consciousness and was taken to hospital. On 11 March 2025, he was forced to run with his feet tied and deprived of food for 24 hours. Between December 2025 and January 2026, he was threatened and assaulted by fellow detainees. On 11 May 2026, prison officers beat him after he requested the transfer of a detainee who posed a danger to the other prisoners. He sustained visible injuries to his face and body.

Dr Amr Abdelfattah suffers from sleep problems and astigmatism but has lacked access to his eyeglasses since January 2025. He told his family that following repeated violence and periods of isolation in harsh conditions, he now suffers from severe back pain, difficulties affecting his legs and reduced control of his left hand. He has not received an adequate medical assessment or treatment for these symptoms.

From September 2024 onwards, three months after his arrest, he was allowed weekly 15-minute telephone calls with his wife, but these calls were monitored and interrupted whenever he attempted to discuss his treatment in detention or developments in his legal case. Between 5 August 2025 and 5 April 2026, all contact with his family was prohibited, including telephone contact. Contact has since resumed on a restricted basis. According to his family, he is only permitted to speak Arabic during calls so that prison authorities can monitor the conversations.

Amnesty International has documented the Saudi authorities' ongoing crackdown on freedom of expression, targeting both citizens and foreign nationals, many of whom have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 31 December 2026

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Amr Abdelfattah (He/him)