

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN, WALED YOUSSEF, UNLAWFULLY DETAINED IN EGYPT IN LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS FOR “LIKING” A FACEBOOK POST**

An Australian man, Waled Youssef, has spent over eight months unlawfully detained in Egypt allegedly for pressing the “like” button on Facebook years ago. His family have grave concerns for his safety and are campaigning for his release ([#GetWaledHome](#)).

The father of two was on a family holiday to visit a sick family member when he was questioned and held in custody on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 for taking a photograph, as a memento of a sightseeing day trip, from the top of a carpark near Tahir square. The Egyptian authorities subsequently completed a search of Mr. Youssef’s phone and he now faces unfounded charges and remains in prison. Mr. Youssef is a dual Australian-Egyptian national and he is one of a number of dual nationals who have been unlawfully detained in Egyptian prisons.

Mr. Youssef is not an activist. He runs a cement rendering business in Sydney and has no political affiliations. His lawyers say the only evidence being put forward to support Mr. Youssef’s ongoing prosecution is a “like” or “share” of an innocuous Facebook post years ago, which could not possibly justify his imprisonment.

Since February, Mr. Youssef has been held in pre-trial detention at one of Egypt’s most notorious prisons, Tora Prison in Cairo. He is being held in unsanitary conditions sharing a cell with 17 other prisoners and sleeping on a concrete floor without a mattress. The COVID-19 pandemic and the public health emergency mean that Mr. Youssef’s detention is not only unlawful, but it is now life-threatening.

**Fadia Youssef** said:

*“My husband Waled is nothing but supportive and loving. He has always been there for our two young children, guiding them through the most important moments in their lives. He is always there for family and friends. I could have never imagined that a trip to Egypt to visit a sick family member would lead his imprisonment. Even after over eight months apart, none of us can begin to comprehend life without him. We miss Waled and want him back home in Sydney with us, where he belongs.”*

Last week, international legal counsel Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, Jennifer Robinson and Clare Duffy filed an urgent appeal with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and three UN Special Rapporteurs calling for Mr. Youssef’s immediate release and return to Australia. **Ms Gallagher QC, Ms Robinson** and **Ms Duffy** said:

*“Mr. Youssef is unjustly detained in one of the world’s most notorious prisons, thousands of miles away from his wife and young children. There is a well-established pattern of Egyptian authorities misusing the law to target those perceived to be critics of the regime. Mr. Youssef’s case is even more extreme: he has no political affiliations and is not an activist.*

*Mr. Youssef's unlawful detention would be deeply distressing at any time, but the COVID-19 pandemic makes his situation even worse. We are gravely concerned about the unhygienic and overcrowded conditions where Mr. Youssef is being held, which pose a danger to his health and life. There have been at least three reported deaths at Tora prison over the past fortnight, and there can be no doubt that many more are uncounted for. We call upon Egypt to immediately release Mr. Youssef and to allow him to return to Sydney."*

Mr. Youssef is not the first Australian-Egyptian dual national to be detained by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government. Brisbane man Hazem Hamouda was detained for more than a year without charge before he was released in April 2019. His daughter, Lamisse Hamouda, who campaigned for his release, is now supporting Mr. Youssef's family in their fight to secure his release and return to Australia. **Lamisse Hamouda** said:

*"The continued arrest of dual citizens is a threat to Egyptian diaspora communities across the globe. It shows that it is no longer safe to visit your country of origin; that it is no longer safe to follow the news online; that it is no longer safe to have a holiday, visit relatives or even take a picture after a day out. It breaks my heart to know another family is experiencing the disorienting and traumatic ordeal of the unjust detainment of a loved one, especially during a time in which COVID-19 has become a threatening part of all our lives.*

*My dad came home last year after a year in Tora prison so we know that it is possible to end this horror. Waled's family shouldn't have to keep waiting as it has already been an agonising nine month, with not even a phone call to connect them to their beloved father and husband. I urge the Australian government to step up and take definitive action to reunite Waled with his family in Sydney before it is too late."*

**\*ENDS\***

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- 1. \*\*\*THE YOUSSEF FAMILY REQUEST PRIVACY AT THIS TIME. PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE FAMILY DIRECTLY, AND THEY WILL NOT BE PROVIDING ANY INTERVIEWS. ALL ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE FOLLOWING MEDIA CONTACTS ONLY.\*\*\***
2. Requests to interview Mr. Youssef's international lawyers, or for further information about the legal case, should be directed to Richard Everingham, Doughty Street Chambers, at [r.everingham@doughtystreet.co.uk](mailto:r.everingham@doughtystreet.co.uk) or +44(0)161 457 0097. Other queries should be directed to Lamisse Hamouda at [getwaledhome@gmail.com](mailto:getwaledhome@gmail.com) or +61(0)466819895.
3. Mr. Youssef is a dual Australian-Egyptian national, and he has been based in Sydney for over twenty years.
4. Mr. Youssef and his family are represented by international counsel Ms. Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, Ms. Jennifer Robison and Ms. Clare Duffy, Doughty Street Chambers.

5. Two urgent appeals have been filed with the United Nations Special Procedures: (i) a petition to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and (ii) an appeal to three Special Rapporteurs, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Ms. Agnès Callamard, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health, Mr. Dainius Pūras, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Ms. Irene Khan.
6. For recent reports of deaths in Tora Prison, Cairo, see:
  - (i) Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: Man Dies in Unjust Detention. Four Deaths in Custody Reported in Three Days*, 3 September 2020: [www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/03/egypt-man-dies-unjust-detention](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/03/egypt-man-dies-unjust-detention)
  - (ii) Mada Masr, *Third detainee dies in Tora Prison in 3-week-span*, 7 September 2020: [www.madamasr.com/en/2020/09/07/news/politics/third-detainee-dies-in-tora-prison-in-3-week-span/](http://www.madamasr.com/en/2020/09/07/news/politics/third-detainee-dies-in-tora-prison-in-3-week-span/).
7. Further information about the campaign is available on social media with the hashtag #GetWaledHome, on twitter @GetWaledHome and on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/getwaledhome](http://www.facebook.com/getwaledhome).