



GET  
WALED  
HOME



doughty street  
chambers

## AUSTRALIAN MAN RETURNS HOME AFTER 10 MONTHS' UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT IN EGYPT

FOR RELEASE 12.00 AEDT (01.00 GMT) MONDAY 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

---

An Australian man, Waled Youssef, has safely returned to Australia after spending 10 months unlawfully detained in Egypt. Mr. Youssef is now quarantining in a Sydney hotel and will be reunited with his family soon.

Mr. Youssef was arrested in January 2020 while on a holiday to visit his family in Egypt with his Australian wife and children during the school holidays. He was detained in the notorious Tora prison in Cairo – where he spent 10 months, thousands of miles away from his family in Australia – for allegedly pressing the “like” button on a Facebook post years ago. His family had grave concerns for his safety and their campaign for his release ([#GetWaledHome](#)) received widespread [media coverage](#) (see [here](#) and [here](#)) and was [supported by Human Rights Watch](#).

After many months of domestic and international legal appeals, engaging with the Australian government and the Egyptian authorities, and United Nations experts, a court ordered his release on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and Mr. Youssef was finally released from detention on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020. However, although out of custody he still had to wait weeks to leave Egypt and fly back to Australia. He has recently arrived back in Sydney and will be reunited with his family once he has completed the coronavirus quarantine requirements.

### Background

The father of two was arrested on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 after taking a photograph while sightseeing from the top of a carpark near Tahir square. The Egyptian authorities subsequently searched Mr. Youssef’s phone, giving rise to false and unfounded allegations arising from innocuous Facebook activity. Mr. Youssef is not an activist and has no political affiliations: he runs a cement rendering business in Sydney. He was held in Tora prison in Egypt in unsanitary conditions, sharing a cell with 17 other prisoners and sleeping on a concrete floor without a mattress, where there had been numerous COVID-19 related deaths. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that Mr. Youssef’s detention was not only unlawful, it was life-threatening.

His family instructed international legal counsel [Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC](#), [Jennifer Robinson](#) and [Clare Duffy](#) of Doughty Street Chambers who filed urgent appeals with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and three UN Special Rapporteurs calling for Mr. Youssef's immediate release and return to Australia. They also engaged with the Australian government, including [calling publicly](#) upon the Australian government to take further action to ensure Mr. Youssef's release in September.

**Waled Youssef** said:

*"I am so relieved to finally be home. I never would have expected a trip to visit my family would see me thrown into Tora prison. It was the most harrowing 10 months of my life. I just want to heal and recover from this unbelievable and horrendous experience."*

**Fadia Youssef** said:

*"Words cannot describe how relieved I am that Waled is safe and back in Sydney. My boys and I cannot wait to give him a big hug once he finishes quarantine. We are counting down the days until he is home. We want to thank everybody for all the support – my family couldn't have got through this without you. We now ask for privacy so that Waled can recover from his ordeal and we can be a normal family again."*

**Ms. Gallagher QC, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Duffy** said:

*"Mr. Youssef should not have spent a day in prison: his detention was unjust and unlawful. It is a huge relief he is now home in Australia and will soon be reunited with his family."*

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. Mr Hamouda and his daughter, Lamisse Hamouda, also supported the Youssef family's campaign for his release.

**Lamisse Hamouda** said:

*"I'm so happy to know that Waled is home and that he will be reunited with his family. Yet, this should have never happened and it remains horrific to me that Waled spent 10 months in prison during a pandemic. There needs to be a review on how we respond to the unlawful detention of dual citizens overseas so that families are spared the extended agony of such ordeals."*

*However, I feel honoured to have been able to pay it forward and support the Youssef family through this ordeal. I know that it takes a community to bring a person home, and it was so amazing to see all the supporters of the #GetWaledHome campaign. I personally understand the financial cost and psychological trauma of the battle to free a loved one from prison, and it does take time to get back on your feet. I hope people*

*give generously to Waled and his family, so that they can now be supported in this next phase of this journey: their healing and recovery."*

Prominent Australian journalist, **Peter Greste**, who was himself detained in Tora prison for over a year back in 2016, had also supported the Youssef family. He said:

*"I know what it is like to be locked up for no good reason in Cairo's notorious Tora prison. Even without the pandemic, the conditions are horrific, while the legal system is brutally slow even when the police have zero evidence.*

*Getting an Australian out and back home takes bloody-minded persistence and smart diplomacy from government, family, lawyers and supporters – both in public and behind the scenes. I am relieved and delighted that Waled will soon be reunited with his family so he can start rebuilding his life. But this whole sorry episode has once again degraded what shred of faith the world had in Egypt's judicial system. The country cannot afford these kinds of gross injustices and human rights abuses."*

Mr Youssef's family is raising funds to cover the significant costs associated with Mr. Youssef's unlawful detention. Further information about the campaign can be found on [Facebook](#) or on twitter, [@GetWaledHome](#).