

The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

20 January 2025

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We, the undersigned 13 freedom of expression and human rights organisations, are writing to you regarding the imprisoned writer and activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah, ahead of your upcoming trip to Egypt.

Alaa, a British citizen, has spent most of the past decade in prison in Egypt and is a key concern for our organisations. Despite having completed his unjust and arbitrary five-year sentence on 29 September 2024, the Egyptian authorities have refused to release him, ignoring his time served in pre-trial detention. This situation violates both international legal norms and Egyptian law.

We appreciate your recent remarks that his case is your ‘number one issue’. However, we remain deeply worried about Alaa’s well-being, as well as the health of his 68-year-old mother, Laila Soueif, who has been on hunger strike for over 110 days to protest her son’s ongoing and arbitrary detention.

We are therefore writing to request that you commit to doing your utmost to visit Alaa Abd el-Fattah during your trip to Egypt, specifically at Wadi al-Natrun prison. As you are acutely aware, despite the UK government’s commitments to securing consular access, this has still not been achieved, in violation of the UK’s rights under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. A direct meeting with Alaa would send a strong message to the Egyptian authorities that the UK government is committed to ensuring his safe return and protecting the rights of its citizens. Additionally, this visit would provide Alaa with a significant morale boost during this extraordinarily difficult time.

Ahead of your upcoming visit to Egypt, we trust that you will raise Alaa’s case at every opportunity, and we sincerely hope that you will be able to return to the UK together. Alaa must be your priority and at the forefront of all discussions with Egyptian officials to secure his release as quickly as possible.

You have publicly condemned Alaa Abd el-Fattah's imprisonment, characterising it as an affront to both Egyptian and international human rights standards. You have also criticised the Egyptian authorities for their treatment of Alaa, asserting that the UK government must hold Egypt accountable for the 'gross violation of fundamental rights' represented by his case. We trust that you will stand by your statements and do your utmost to visit Alaa in prison and to return with him to the UK during your upcoming visit.

Yours sincerely,

Sacha Deshmukh, Chief Executive, **Amnesty International UK**

Quinn McKew, Executive Director, **ARTICLE 19**

Chris Doyle, Director, **Council for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)**

Jillian C. York, Director for International Freedom of Expression, **Electronic Frontier Foundation**

Daniel Gorman, Director, **English PEN**

James Lynch, Co-Director, **FairSquare**

Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director, Human Rights Watch, **Human Rights Watch**

Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC, Director, **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)**

Jim Killock, Executive Director, **Open Rights Group**

Romana Cacchioli, Executive Director, **PEN International**

Fiona O'Brien, UK Director, **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**

Ricky Monahan Brown, President, **Scottish PEN**

Menna Elfyn, President, **Wales PEN Cymru**