

URGENT ACTION

EGYPTIAN ARBITRARILY DETAINED FOR ROLE IN MOVIE

On December 20, 2025, Egyptian national and Danish resident Hassan El Sayed was arrested upon his arrival at Cairo International Airport. National Security Agency officials questioned him about his role in the movie, *The Eagles of the Republic*, where he appeared very briefly as a priest. Following his arrest, he was taken before a prosecutor, who ordered his pretrial detention pending investigations into the charge of “joining a terrorist group while being aware of its objectives”. Since then, his pretrial detention in case No. 4529 of the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) has been renewed. The Egyptian authorities must immediately release Hassan El Sayed and drop all charges against him as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Authorities must allow him to safely reunite with his family in Denmark.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **UA 18.26**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Public Prosecutor Mohamed Shawky Ayyad
Office of the Public Prosecutor, Cairo, Arab Republic of
Egypt;
Fax: +202 2577 4716
X: @EgyptianPPO

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

CC: Egyptian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Motaz Zahran
3521 International Court, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Email: embassy@egyptembassy.net

Dear Counselor,

I am concerned about the arrest and arbitrary detention of **Hassan El Sayed** since December 20, 2025. Security forces questioned him regarding his twenty second appearance in the movie, *The Eagles of the Republic*, in which he played a Coptic Christian priest. The film was released during the 2025 Cannes Film Festival.

Following his arrest, Hassan El Sayed was subjected to enforced disappearance for five days, from December 20 and 25. During this time, his family had no information about his fate or whereabouts. It was later revealed that security forces had taken him to the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) on December 22, where he was questioned by a prosecutor without a lawyer present. Since then, Hassan El Sayed has appeared seven times before the SSSP in online hearings that last only a few minutes. He remains in pretrial detention pending investigations into unfounded charges of “joining a terrorist group while being aware of its objectives”, an offense punishable by up to 15 years in prison. He is currently detained in the 10th of Ramadan prison, where his lawyer is barred from visiting him and can only communicate with him during online hearings.

I urge you to ensure that Hassan El Sayed is immediately and unconditionally released and that all charges against him are dropped. He must also be reunited with his family in Denmark. Pending his release, he must be held in conditions that meet international standards and be granted access to adequate healthcare, as well as his family and lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hassan El Sayed is a 60-year-old Egyptian citizen and Danish resident. He has been residing in Denmark for nearly 40 years; he has a wife and two kids who all hold Danish citizenship. Before his arrest, he worked as a property caretaker in Copenhagen. Prior to that, he worked for the Library of Nørrebro, part of Copenhagen public libraries for nearly twenty years. Before his arrest on December 20, 2025, Hassan El Sayed had traveled to Egypt freely.

According to his relatives, Hassan El Sayed likes to act in movies as a hobby. He played small roles in some Danish movies as well as in the movie *Boy from Heaven* by the same director as *Eagles of the Republic*. The movie *Eagles of the Republic* is political thriller that satirizes state propaganda and portrays authoritarian practices in Egypt, including the role of the military. None of the films in director Tarik Saleh's Cairo trilogy, namely the *Nile Hilton Incident*, *Boy from Heaven*, and *Eagles of the Republic*, screened commercially in Egypt. Amnesty International is not aware of official statements confirming the censorship of the films, but media reports indicate that the films were not granted screening licenses in Egypt. In practice, politically sensitive films are denied screening licenses by the General Authority for Censorship of Works of Art, under the ministry of culture.

According to Hassan El Sayed's family, he does not have any history of political or other activism. His family noted that when he agreed to appear in the *Eagles of the Republic* film, he did not have access to the full screenplay or an overview of the film's storyline. His involvement was limited strictly to the specific lines assigned to him for the brief scene in which he appeared.

Hassan El Sayed is currently detained in the 10th of Ramadan prison. Amnesty International has documented the cruel and inhuman conditions of detention inside the 10th of Ramadan prison (section 6). According to lawyers and relatives of detainees, all detainees are deprived of sunlight and only permitted daily exercise indoors.

Egyptian authorities have demonstrated a persistent lack of tolerance for actual or perceived dissent, targeting journalists, activists, lawyers, opposition politicians and other individuals who criticize government policies or denounce the authorities' widespread human rights violations. Amnesty International has documented repeated waves of arrests and prosecutions of people solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Those detained in politically motivated cases are frequently subjected to prolonged arbitrary detention, including extended pre-trial detention renewed automatically by prosecutors and judges without meaningful judicial review. Amnesty International has also repeatedly raised concerns about systematic violations of fair trial rights in Egypt, particularly in cases of a political nature, including the right to a lawyer of one's choosing particularly during the initial questioning by the police, the right to adequate defense, the right not to self-incriminate and to presumption of innocence, the right to a fair and public hearing before a competent, impartial, and independent tribunal, and the right to be protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: September 16, 2026

NAME AND PRONOUN: Hassan El Sayed (He/Him)