

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, *Maryland*  
Chairman



Rep. Steve Cohen, *Tennessee*  
Co-Chairman

8/4/2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

In 2011, the people of Egypt achieved something remarkable – they ousted a corrupt regime and brought about a change in government through largely peaceful protests. In doing so, they demonstrated that the promise of democracy is not limited to an exclusive club of nations but rather is a universal hope and ambition requisite for a more accountable government. The people of Egypt wanted free and fair elections, democratic and economic reform, and above all, dignity for themselves and their loved ones.

Alaa Abd el-Fattah was one of the leaders of the movement that advocated this change. Through his writings and public appearances, he provided an intellectual backbone for the disparate groups that shared in the vision for a more democratic Egypt. Tragically for him, this very purpose led to his arrest and conviction. Mr. Abd el-Fattah was arrested, then released to only be arrested again. He has been in prison for eight years now. His family reports they have irregular contact with him and his physical condition has reportedly deteriorated. Mr. Abd el-Fattah's son has grown up largely without ever knowing his father due to his detainment. Not only is this a personal tragedy, but also a shattering of the promise of the Arab Spring.

Mr. Abd el-Fattah is one of the many political prisoners in Egypt; yet his release would bring hope to them all. As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Representative for Political Prisoners – an organization to which Egypt is a Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation – I request that your department include among its immediate priorities in Egypt the swift release of Mr. Abd el-Fattah, and in the interim, urgently impress upon the Egyptian government the expectation of more humane conditions during his incarceration, including exercise time, freedom of movement outside of his cell, and reinstatement of half hour – if not longer – visits by his son and others. Additionally, I encourage a policy towards Egypt that includes the release of political prisoners and other wrongfully detained individuals.

Alaa is not a danger to the Egyptian government and his only fault is being a true patriot of his country. I look forward to your response and receiving information on the conditions of Mr. Abd el-Fattah's imprisonment, his well-being, and efforts underway to secure his release.

As always, I remain,

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Cohen  
Co-Chairman  
OSCE PA Special Representative on Political Prisoners