

UK politicians demand British activist Abd El-Fattah be deported to Egypt's torture prisons

Thomas Scripps
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The British ruling class has launched a campaign in favour of stripping citizenship from its political opponents and deporting them into foreign dungeons.

Alaa Abd El-Fattah, a British-Egyptian democracy activist, returned to the UK last Friday after Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi lifted his travel ban. He had been released in September from the Egyptian prison system where he has spent most of the last 12 years on trumped up charges for exposing the crimes of the Cairo regime. He suffered torture and isolation while imprisoned.

Successive British governments have, none too urgently, sought his release.

However, no sooner had Abd El-Fattah arrived on British soil than a howl of outrage went up in the right-wing media and among Conservative Party and Reform UK politicians that a terrible mistake had been made. He should have been left to El-Sisi's regime, where not only torture but disappearances and executions are routine.

The pretext was a series of social media posts, more than a decade old, in which Abd El-Fattah makes several politically backward comments, including championing the killing of "any" Zionists.

He has apologised, describing his posts as "expressions of a young man's anger and frustrations in a time of regional crises (the wars on Iraq, on Lebanon and Gaza)... written as part of online insult battles" by a "much younger person, deeply enmeshed in antagonistic online cultures, utilising flippant, shocking and sarcastic tones in the nascent, febrile world of social media."

He also pointedly explains that he was, "in the real world, engaged in the non-violent pro-democracy movement and repeatedly incarcerated for calling for full equality, human rights and democracy for all." This

included, "publicly rejecting anti-Jewish speech in Egypt, often at risk to myself".

It is this record which really angers his persecutors, especially his defence of the rights of the Palestinians against the fascistic Israeli state and its genocide.

That this is the real issue has been underscored by the blatant lies branding Abd El-Fattah a homophobe and Holocaust denier. As he has answered, "a tweet being shared to allege homophobia on my part was actually ridiculing homophobia. I have paid a steep price for my public support for LGBTQ rights in Egypt and the world.

"Another tweet has been wrongly interpreted to suggest Holocaust denial—but in fact the exchange shows that I was clearly mocking Holocaust denial."

Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch and Reform UK leader Nigel Farage have called for Abd El-Fattah to have his British citizenship stripped and be deported, with Badenoch snarling, "I do not want people who hate Britain coming to our country" and Farage announcing he has reported Abd El-Fattah to counterterrorism police.

Badenoch seized on the occasion to demand political obedience as a condition of citizenship, claiming, "British citizenship is more than a passport. It means subscribing to our values."

After less than a day of this filthy campaign, the Labour government had apologised for ever seeking to defend its citizen's basic human rights. This had been an "unacceptable failure", Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper explained in a letter to MPs, the result of "serious information failures" and "completely inadequate" due diligence procedures.

A review would be held to ensure government systems for handling high-profile consular and human rights cases were "functioning properly" to consign

democracy activists to a lifetime of imprisonment and abuse. *The Times* reports, with quotes, that Labour ministers are also pushing behind the scenes for Abd El-Fattah's citizenship to be revoked.

This is a lawless ruling class. It sees human rights and international law as obstacles, things which stand in the way of treating human beings as the docile material for exploitation and fodder for war they would like them to be.

The effort to secure Abd El-Fattah's release from El-Sisi's clutches was a hangover over a previous period when pretences had to be kept up over defending human rights, which everyone involved now deeply regrets. Former ministers are falling over themselves to apologise for having ever sought his release. Their only current interest in human rights is how best to remove them from migrants and protesters.

To them, the Egyptian dictator—a ruthless opponent of social opposition, key architect of the Gaza genocide and paid border guard of Fortress Europe—is a model.

Conditions in Egypt's prisons drove El-Fattah to a hunger strike in 2022. His mother Laila Soueif and sister Mona Seif did the same in his support, on multiple occasions, in the UK. What is that to a Labour government still starving four innocent young people to death—having risked the lives of another four who have now ended their strikes—as they seek fair trial and treatment?

Heba Muraisi, Teuta Hoxha and Kamran Ahmed—held on remand for Palestine Action related protests—have been refusing food for 58, 52 and 51 days. Lewie Chiaramello, who has diabetes and refuses food every other day, is at day 37. Government officials have refused any meetings with them, their family, or their legal or political representatives. All four could be dead by the time Parliament resumes on January 5.

As ever, Starmer moves in lockstep with the dictatorial agenda of his friend and ally Donald Trump, who has made extensive use of deportation against his political opponents and is pursuing his own campaign to denaturalise “disloyal” US citizens.

Just like the US, there is barely a peep of protest in the media, which has luridly reported the manufactured scandal. The comments made by MPs are only the most naked expression of an entire class breaking rapidly with democratic forms of rule. Especially nauseating are the efforts of the *Guardian* to provide apologies for

Labour's response for any of their liberal audience suffering the last death spasms of a conscience.

“Abd el-Fattah citizenship row shows shift on questions of national identity”, writes political correspondent Eleni Courea, using an increase in the percentage of people who believe you must be born British to be “truly British” to suggest Labour are acting under pressure of the popular will—when fully two-thirds do not agree with that statement.

The paper has also chosen this moment to publish a podcast version of its July article, “Starmer v Starmer: why is the former human rights lawyer so cautious about defending human rights?” Cautious!

The Socialist Equality Party unequivocally condemns the campaign against Abd El-Fattah's democratic rights, and those of all the political prisoners and detainees who will come after him if the government gets its way. They rely for their defence against all factions of the ruling elite—Starmer's government especially—on the urgent construction of a mass socialist movement in the working class.



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