

As you may have heard by now, Egyptian Blogger Alaa Abdel Fatah has been arrested alongside 10 others while demonstrating in support of the independence of the Judiciary in Egypt and the release of previous demonstrators who were detained 2 weeks earlier. The Police entrapped them, cordoning off their peaceful protest and then proceeded to handpick the demonstrators that they wanted to detain, beat them, and then arrested them.

Alaa and those arrested with him are now arrested for 15 days "pending investigation", which could be renewed indefinitely if the state so wishes. He and the men were sent to the infamous Torah Prison and the girls to the Qanatir prison for the duration. This makes them hardly safe, because stuff that goes on in Egyptian prisons on the hands of the jailors: beatings, sexual assaults, torture of all kinds.

Currently [there are about 48 detained](#), 6 of them are bloggers, and 3 of them are women. The best known is Alaa, which makes him the posterboy of this campaign - but getting them out is equally as important. Egypt has fewer than 830 bloggers all in all, 60 of whom are political and less than 30 are politically active. Now 6 of those are in jail - 20% of all politically active Egyptian bloggers - and amongst them one of Egypt's most highly profiled one.

This is by no means a co-incidence. Government agents handpicked people to arrest from amongst the protesters. They have been wanting to get Alaa for a long time now, precisely because he is high profile, and because he helps organize the protests and spread the information through the blog aggregator he runs (www.manalaa.net). With Alaa gone, Aggregator could shut down without his maintenance and other bloggers could get too scared to be active and find no way to organize or reach one other. It's of vital importance that he gets released ASAP.

Alaa is a secular democracy activist, and a tireless advocate of freedom, free speech and human rights. He organizes demonstrations and engages in protests against all kinds of injustices in Egypt and is the winner of the international Best of the Blogs award from Reporters Without Borders last December.

Alaa was arrested while protesting to support Egypt's Judges fight for independence. 2 weeks earlier he had organized a "National Unity" protest to show solidarity with Egypt's Christians who suffered a sectarian attack on 3 churches on Good Friday. Before that he was one of the few voices that urged calm and peaceful dialogue while the cartoon crisis was hitting its peak. He is a desperately needed voice of moderation and democracy in Egypt, and one of the few flickers of hope in a country whose future seems mire between the crushing rule of the regime and the fanaticism of the Islamist opposition.

And now Alaa needs your help. We have started an e-mail campaign to the Egyptian embassies and the US State Department in order to push for his release, and have started protests in front of the Egyptian embassy and consulates in the US for his release. We could use your help in getting the word out and sending them an e-mail demanding his release.

Addresses for the Egyptian embassies in the US and Canada are available [here](#), templates for e-mails to be sent to the embassies [here](#), and the contact information for the person to e-mail in the US state department is [here](#). If you are a journalist or know one, help us spread the word by writing about this or demanding your local newspaper write about this. If you have a blog or a website and would like to raise awareness about this issue, banners for the Free Alaa campaign can be found [here](#) and [here](#). We could use any help we can get, so if you have any ideas or ways to help us, please do.

All the best,

The Sandmonkey