# Laila Soueif’s hunger strike hits 250 days as health crisis deepens amid call for UK intervention



Laila Soueif, the 69-year-old mother of imprisoned British-Egyptian activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah, is facing life-threatening health issues as her hunger strike approaches the 250-day mark. Recently hospitalised, her blood sugar levels are critically low, prompting doctors to warn of significant risks that include the potential for "sudden death." According to medical reports from St Thomas’ Hospital in London, her ketone levels have reached such elevated levels that they can no longer be measured by hospital equipment, indicating severe metabolic distress.

Ms Soueif's hunger strike, initiated in September of the previous year, is a desperate measure aimed at advocating for her son, who has been incarcerated in Egypt for more than a decade. His most recent charge stems from a Facebook post where he exposed instances of torture within Egyptian prisons. The weight of her protest is evident; she has lost over 36 kilograms, constituting more than 40% of her body weight. Outside the hospital, her daughter Sanaa expressed chilling sentiments, stating that it feels like they are "losing her" and urgently called upon UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to take immediate action.

The UK government's response has been to assert concern for Ms Soueif's well-being while continuing to advocate for Abd El-Fattah's release. A spokesperson for the Foreign Office indicated that they are maintaining communication with the family and actively pressing the Egyptian authorities at the highest levels for a resolution. Prime Minister Starmer himself has engaged in dialogues with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, urging him for the speedy release of Abd El-Fattah. However, the family's dissatisfaction is palpable; they remain frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of urgency.

Alaa Abd El-Fattah, celebrated as a prominent figure during the 2011 Arab Spring, now finds himself ensnared in a repressive political climate in Egypt that has seen thousands detained under dubious circumstances. His incarceration not only highlights issues surrounding human rights and civil liberties in Egypt but also reflects the growing concern among advocacy groups such as Amnesty International. The organisation has documented the widespread arbitrary detention of individuals, asserting that Abd El-Fattah's case is emblematic of a broader campaign against dissent.

The continued hunger strike by Laila Soueif stands as a powerful yet troubling testament to a mother’s relentless fight for her son. As her health deteriorates, the urgency of intervention escalates. Activists and supporters are rallying for both her welfare and the release of Abd El-Fattah, grappling with the harsh realities of both a mother's sacrifice and a state's indifference. The situation serves as a poignant reminder of the extreme measures individuals are compelled to take in the face of injustice and governmental apathy.

Efforts to secure Alaa's release are compounded by the global outcry and calls for accountability directed at the Egyptian government. Activists argue that the UK, as Alaa's country of citizenship, bears a moral obligation to intensify its diplomatic efforts. However, the reality of international relations poses complex challenges, as diplomatic engagements often take time amidst geopolitical considerations. The stark dichotomy of a mother fighting for her son while balancing her life against a backdrop of systemic oppression presents a gripping narrative in the ongoing struggle for human rights.

As this situation unfolds, the urgency remains: will the UK government act swiftly enough to prevent further tragedy in a story that encapsulates both familial devotion and the stark realities of modern political oppression?

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/laila-soueif-alaa-abd-el-fattah-egypt-hunger-strike-starmer-b2761236.html), [[2]](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/uk-egypt-mothers-hunger-strike-for-imprisoned-activist-son-alaa-abd-el-fattah-could-be-a-matter-of-life-and-death/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/laila-soueif-alaa-abd-el-fattah-egypt-hunger-strike-starmer-b2761236.html), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/28/mother-of-egypt-detainee-agrees-to-glucose-drip-after-150-day-hunger-strike)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/26/mother-of-egypt-detainee-alaa-abd-el-fattah-hunger-strike-uk), [[5]](https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/02/alaa-abd-el-fattahs-mother-laila-soueif-calls-uk-government-help-hunger-strike)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/alaa-abdel-fattahs-mother-starts-hunger-strike-says-wont-eat-until-his-release), [[7]](https://rsf.org/en/rsf-calls-egypt-immediately-free-alaa-abdel-fattah-his-mother-hits-100-days-hunger-strike)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/laila-soueif-alaa-abd-el-fattah-egypt-hunger-strike-starmer-b2761236.html), [[5]](https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/02/alaa-abd-el-fattahs-mother-laila-soueif-calls-uk-government-help-hunger-strike)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/laila-soueif-alaa-abd-el-fattah-egypt-hunger-strike-starmer-b2761236.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/uk-egypt-mothers-hunger-strike-for-imprisoned-activist-son-alaa-abd-el-fattah-could-be-a-matter-of-life-and-death/> - Amnesty International reports on Laila Soueif, mother of jailed activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah, hospitalised after 150 days of hunger strike. At 68, she has lost nearly 30kg since September, consuming only herbal tea, black coffee, and rehydration salts. Doctors warn of life-threatening risks due to dangerously low blood sugar and blood pressure levels. The UK government has been urged to secure Alaa's release, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer meeting Laila and committing to press for his freedom at the highest levels of the Egyptian government.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/28/mother-of-egypt-detainee-agrees-to-glucose-drip-after-150-day-hunger-strike> - The Guardian details Laila Soueif's 152-day hunger strike to free her son, Alaa Abd el-Fattah, from a Cairo jail. Admitted to St Thomas' hospital due to critically low blood sugar, she agreed to a glucose drip as a temporary measure. Despite her deteriorating health, Laila insists on continuing her protest until there is a positive response from the Egyptian government regarding her son's release. Her son, Alaa, has been imprisoned for over a decade, with his most recent detention for sharing a Facebook post about torture in Egypt.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/26/mother-of-egypt-detainee-alaa-abd-el-fattah-hunger-strike-uk> - The Guardian reports on Laila Soueif, 68, who began a hunger strike in September to protest her son Alaa Abd el-Fattah's continued imprisonment in Egypt. Despite completing his five-year sentence, Alaa remains detained, leading Laila to consume only herbal tea, black coffee, and rehydration salts. Admitted to hospital due to dangerously low blood sugar and blood pressure, she continues her protest, urging the UK government to secure her son's release. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has met with the family but has yet to secure a call with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.
5. <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/02/alaa-abd-el-fattahs-mother-laila-soueif-calls-uk-government-help-hunger-strike> - The Electronic Frontier Foundation highlights Laila Soueif's ongoing hunger strike to secure the release of her son, Alaa Abd el-Fattah, from a Cairo jail. At 68, Laila has been on hunger strike since September, consuming only water, coffee, tea, and rehydration salts. Alaa, a British-Egyptian blogger and activist, was sentenced to five years in prison for sharing a Facebook post about a death in police custody. The UK government has been urged to take immediate action to secure Alaa's release, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer meeting with Laila and pledging to press for his freedom at the highest levels of the Egyptian government.
6. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/alaa-abdel-fattahs-mother-starts-hunger-strike-says-wont-eat-until-his-release> - Middle East Eye reports on Laila Soueif, mother of British-Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah, who began a hunger strike to protest her son's continued imprisonment in Egypt. Despite completing his five-year sentence, Alaa remains detained, leading Laila to consume only herbal tea, black coffee, and rehydration salts. She considers the continued detention a grave injustice and unlawful, urging the Egyptian authorities to release her son.
7. <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-calls-egypt-immediately-free-alaa-abdel-fattah-his-mother-hits-100-days-hunger-strike> - Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Alaa Abd el-Fattah, whose mother, Laila Soueif, has been on hunger strike for 100 days to secure his freedom. Alaa, a British-Egyptian blogger and activist, was sentenced to five years in prison for 'spreading false news' and should have been released on 29 September. Laila, 68, has lost nearly 30kg since starting her strike in September, consuming only herbal tea, black coffee, and rehydration salts. RSF condemns the UK's failure to defend its citizen and Egypt's disregard for the rule of law.