



[Human Rights Activist Files a Lawsuit Against the Ex-Egyptian Prime Minister](#)

Former political prisoner and human rights activist Mohamed Soltan filed a lawsuit against ex-Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem El-Beblawi over his detention. Soltan, an Egyptian-American, was arrested, detained, and tortured during a brutal crackdown in Cairo back in 2013. He engaged in a 15-month hunger strike and was eventually released in May of 2015 after relinquishing his Egyptian citizenship. In the lawsuit, Soltan accuses El-Beblawi of coordinating with other government officials to oversee his arrest and torture. El-Beblawi currently resides in the Washington D.C. area, and the 1991 Torture Victim Protection Act allows civil suits to be filed in the United States against individuals who committed torture or killings while acting in an official capacity for a foreign nation, if the defendants are in the U.S. and no longer serving as heads of state.

Soltan has stated that he went to Egypt in 2013 after graduating from college because he wanted to “help build my country of origin into a place that respected human rights, democratic values, and truth.” He was shot by Egyptian security forces during the Rabaa crackdown in August of 2013 after the police had been ordered to clear a Cairo sit-in. The protest was being held by supporters of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, who was overthrown by a military coup back in July. Soltan was part of a media committee reporting on violations against the Morsi supporters and was later arrested by police who were looking for his father, a former deputy minister under Morsi. In total, the crackdown led to the killing of at least 1,000 people and the arrest of tens of thousands of political activists and journalists.

While in jail, Soltan was burned with cigarettes and severely tortured. He was forced to listen to his father, Salah Soltan, being beaten and was goaded and encouraged to commit suicide by the prison guards. Soltan was also denied medical treatment for the damage done to his arm by the gunshot wound he suffered at the hands of security forces and instead, his cellmates who were also doctors operated on him using a razor and pliers without any anesthetic or wound sterilization. According to the lawsuit, his ribs were broken, metal nails that held his bones together began to tear out of his elbow and skin, and screws shifted near his ulnar nerve which caused excruciating pain. “You don’t get to fully put back the pieces of your life after a horrendous experience like that,” said Soltan in a recent interview.

Since his release and return to the United States, Soltan has become a human rights activist for other political prisoners. He lives in Virginia, studies at Georgetown University, and works as an advocate for his foundation – The Freedom Initiative. Soltan has said that he continues to get calls about friends or relatives being arrested, and also bears burn marks on his neck, bullet scars, and limited motion in his left arm from his time in captivity. “Having firsthand knowledge of the level of brutality and inhumanity prisoners face...I have to attempt to get some justice,” he says.