

## The trial of Naguib Sawiris

**Naguib Sawiris was accused of contempt for tweeting an image of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, respectively sporting a bushy beard and veil, writes Jacob Amis**



In June 2011, Naguib Sawiris tweeted an image of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, respectively sporting a bushy beard and veil, with the caption "Mickey and Minnie after...". The Egyptian tycoon and founder-financier of the secular Free Egyptians Party soon found himself at the centre of a [public outcry](#). Within days, a Facebook page calling for a boycott of Sawiris' newspaper and telecoms businesses attracted tens of thousands of supporters. Sawiris apologised (again, via Twitter): "I apologise to anyone who didn't take this as a joke. I just thought it was a funny picture, no disrespect meant! Sorry."

[Sawiris was accused](#) of contempt of religion under Article 98(f) of the Egyptian penal code, which punishes "whoever exploits religion in order to promote extremist ideologies by word of mouth or in

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any other manner, with a view to stirring up sedition, disparaging or contempt of any divine religion or its adherents, or prejudicing national unity.” The maximum penalty is five years’ imprisonment.

Legal action was brought to the public prosecutor by two groups of lawyers, one of which was led by Mamdouh Ismail, a member of parliament for the Salafi party Hizb an-Nour. Sawiris’ lawyer [described](#) the charges as an attack on Coptic Christians, Egypt’s largest religious minority, to which Sawiris belongs.

By March 2012, both cases had been dismissed by separate courts – but the legislation upon which they were based remains unchallenged. Mamdouh Ismail [declared](#) his intention to appeal the decision.

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