

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypte-hundreds-of-journalists-object-to-07-11-2014,47216.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Persecution

Hundreds of journalists object to unconditional media support for regime

7 November 2014

More than 500 journalists used online social media last weekend to proclaim their opposition to a joint statement by the editors of 17 state and privately-owned media in support of the anti-terrorism policies of a government that exploits security threats to persecute journalists with Al-Jazeera and other independent media.

The joint [statement](#) by the editors was posted on the newspaper *Al-Wafd's* website on 26 October, two days after more 30 soldiers were killed in two [militant attacks](#) in North Sinai – the deadliest since Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi's overthrow in July 2013.

The statement [called](#) for a new editorial policy designed to combat the "infiltration of elements supporting terrorism into the press" and, in effect, urged the media to rally behind the regime and ban any criticism of state institutions, including the police, armed forces and judicial system.

"The new editorial policy adopted by some media does not represent the community of Egyptian journalists and threatens fundamental freedoms in Egypt, including freedom of information and media independence," Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said.

"The government is becoming more and more committed to a policy of gagging the press and systematically persecuting independent media on the pretext of combatting terrorism."

This decision by the 17 editors to give President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's government their unconditional support is being criticized both within their own news organizations and by other media, which have condemned such submission to state control.

As the security situation worsens, the regime is exploiting the threat of terrorism to [reject](#) any criticism of its human rights violations. Media personnel are among the leading victims of its authoritarian policies, with independent reporting routinely prompting censorship and arrests.

Al-Jazeera journalists still in the regime's sights

Lawyers acting for **Mohamed Al-Fahmy**, an *Al-Jazeera* journalist with dual Egyptian and Canadian citizenship, appealed yesterday for his release on health grounds. Fahmy needs an urgent operation for a shoulder injury sustained at the time of his arrest. He also needs treatment for hepatitis C.

Fahmy and two other *Al-Jazeera* English journalists – Australian **Peter Greste** and Egyptian **Baher Mohamed** – have been [held](#) for more than 300 days for allegedly supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and have been given sentences ranging from seven to ten years in prison. The [court of cassation](#) is to hear their appeal petitions on 1 January 2015.

A Cairo criminal court meanwhile [sentenced](#) *Al-Jazeera* presenter **Ahmed Mansour** to 15 years in prison in absentia on 11 October for supposedly torturing a lawyer in Tahrir Square during the January 2011 uprising.

Mansour, who [says](#) he learned of his conviction from media reports, insists that he was not in Egypt at the time of the attack on the lawyer. He also condemned the [lack of credibility](#) displayed by the judicial system in asking Interpol to issue an international warrant for his arrest. Interpol rejected the request on the grounds that it did not meet the required criteria.

Abdul-Moqtader al-Wahsh, a 21-year-old student and freelance photographer was arrested on 26 October while [filming](#) a demonstration by workers in Mahalla against the terrorist attacks. He was filming it for *Al-Jazeera*. Now in pre-trial detention, he is [accused](#) of supporting a terrorist organization and disseminating false information.

Eslam Al Shafi'i, a cameraman working for *Y.N.N.* (Yqeen), was [arrested](#) while covering the aftermath of an explosion outside Cairo University on 22 October. Although he showed his press card and ID, the police took him away in a vehicle without any explanation. He was released the next day after interrogation.

Reporters Without Borders deputy programme director Virginie Dangles added: "*We condemn these arbitrary arrests and convictions of journalists and we urge the authorities to release not only Al-Fahmy, who needs treatment, but also all the other unjustly detained journalists, and to drop all the charges against them.*"

Constant censorship

Mahmoud Saad was [suspended](#) as presenter of *Al-Nahar TV's* programme "Akher Al-Nahar" on 25 October after a guest mentioned the 1967 Six Days War on the day of the North Sinai attacks. As a result of this reference to an event regarded as damaging to [army morale](#), not only was Saad temporarily replaced but the TV station's programme organization was also [overhauled](#).

Dream 2 TV's discussion programme "Al-Ashera Masa'an" was [cut](#) short in mid-broadcast on 19 October during a report about a child's death in a school in Matrouh governorate. The station said the interruption was due to technical problems but presenter **Wael El-Ebrashy** blamed pressure from the government, especially the housing and education ministers.

Egypt is ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 44.7 kb)
-