

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypt-rwb-calls-for-release-of-al-26-12-2014,47425.html>

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Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Appeal

## RWB calls for release of Al-Jazeera journalists

26 December 2014

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Reporters Without Borders again urges the Egyptian authorities to free Al-Jazeera journalists Peter Greste, Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed and end the judicial nightmare to which they have been subjected. A court is due to begin hearing their appeal on 1 January.

The first anniversary of their arrest will be on 29 December. In June they were given [sentences](#) ranging from seven to ten years in prison on charges of disseminating false news and belonging to a "terrorist organization." President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi alluded on 20 November to the possibility of a pardon if it serves the national interest.

*"We urge President Sisi to pardon the Al-Jazeera journalists, who are not guilty of the charges brought against them and were just doing their job at the time of their arrest,"* Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said.

*"Their arbitrary conviction perfectly illustrates how the regime has been cracking down on foreign and local media personnel with real or imagined links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Journalists must not be persecuted in the name of combatting terrorism."*

In a letter published at the start of December by Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, Fahmy – who was Al-Jazeera English's Cairo bureau chief and who has dual Canadian and Egyptian nationality – [said he and his colleagues were victims](#) of the cold war being wage between Egypt and Qatar, where Al-Jazeera is based.

He also criticized the failure of news media to provide journalists with adequate protection and said they should maintain a dialogue with the governments of countries where they send their journalists in order to prevent them from being arrested on spurious grounds.

### **International support**

The jailed Al-Jazeera journalists have received a great deal of international support in the past year and their case has been much discussed on social networks. The [#FreeAJStaff](#) hashtag [went viral](#) and has been used more than 450,000 times.

Reporters Without Borders has also campaigned for their release. Its actions included launching a [petition](#) in July that called for them to be freed and accused the Egyptian authorities of violating the new constitution adopted in January.

When Sisi visited Paris in November, Reporters Without Borders addressed an [open letter](#) to French President François Hollande pointing out that the iniquitous proceedings against the Al-Jazeera journalists had cast doubt on the independence of the Egyptian judicial system. The Egyptian government had a responsibility to ensure that journalists receive the protection they need to report the news freely and safely, Reporters Without Borders said.

Ever since the army seized power in July 2013, Sisi has orchestrated a regime of terror that has constantly targeted journalists working for media directly or indirectly linked with the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been classified as a "terrorist organization."

At least [30 journalists](#) were arbitrarily arrested in 2014 on charges of organizing or participating in demonstrations or supporting a terrorist organization. According to the Reporters Without Borders tally, at least 20 news providers are currently being held arbitrarily, including several foreign citizens.

One of [the world's biggest prisons](#) for journalists in 2014, Egypt is ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the latest Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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