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<http://www.rsf.org/egypte-abdel-fattah-al-sissi-in-paris-26-11-2014,47280.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Open Letter

Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi in Paris - Open letter to François Hollande

26 November 2014

Dear President Hollande,

Reporters Without Borders, an international organization that defends freedom of information, would like to draw your attention to the critical situation of independent media and journalists in Egypt as you prepare to receive Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi today.

In Egypt, which is **ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#)**, **the authorities are cracking down in a shocking manner on journalists in the name of combatting terrorism.**

Many journalists have been arrested, detained and prosecuted on anti-terrorism grounds in recent months. In a witchhunt against Muslim Brotherhood members and sympathizers, the authorities have jailed both Egyptian and foreign journalists whose only crime was to practice their profession.

The authorities have targeted Qatari TV broadcaster *Al-Jazeera* in particular. There has been an international outcry about the sentences ranging from seven to ten years in prison that were imposed on three of its journalists last June. Their appeal is due to be heard on 1 January 2015.

Since President Mohamed Morsi's ouster on 3 July 2013, more than 20 journalists and activists have been arbitrarily detained on the grounds that they worked for news media owned by or affiliated to the Moslem Brotherhood. Many of them have gone on [hunger strike](#). In 2014 alone, at least 30 journalists have been arbitrarily arrested for allegedly organizing or taking part in demonstrations or supporting a terrorist organization.

The authorities stop at nothing to gag media and journalists that do not toe the official line, thereby flouting the guarantees enshrined in article 71 of Egypt's constitution, which forbids censorship and prison sentences for media offences.

Freedom of information is also undermined by the Egyptian media's extreme polarization into Morsi supporters and opponents. [More than 600 journalists](#) recently took issue with the fact that certain Egyptian media are [following the government line](#) on combatting terrorism to the point of banning any criticism of state institutions.

The situation of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of information, has now sunk to a level that is unprecedented in Egypt since Hosni Mubarak's overthrow. Despite the strategic interests linking France and Egypt, economic and security concerns should not eclipse the obligation to support efforts to establish lasting democracy in Egypt.

We therefore respectfully ask you point out to President Sisi that his government's current excesses are incompatible with an improvement in relations between Paris and Cairo.

We thank you in advance for the attention you give to our request.

Sincerely,

Christophe Deloire
Reporters Without Borders secretary-general
