Reporters Without Borders

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Arbitrary detention
Call for well-known Yemeni blogger's release
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Reporters Without Borders condemns well-known Yemeni human rights activist and blogger **Feras Shamsan**'s detention since 1 February, when he was arrested while covering Cairo's International Book Fair.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, Shamsan was interviewing someone attending the book fair when a passer-by objected to the interviewee's comments on the political situation. Police intervened in the ensuing argument, arresting Shamsan.

After he was charged with "broadcasting false news and rumours that disturb public peace and security," a prosecutor ordered him held for another 15 days on 4 February "for further investigation." Shamsan appealed against this decision but, on 6 February, a court in the Cairo district of Nasr City confirmed that he should remain in detention until 19 February.

Shamsan made a name for himself when he began documenting human rights violations during the 2011 uprising in Yemen.

"Egypt's current authorities must stop detaining news providers on trumped-up charges and instead respect the principles enshrined in the new constitution, including article 71, which forbids prison sentences for media offences," Reporters Without Borders said.

"As freedom of information is the cornerstone of any democratic state, we urge the authorities to release all detained news providers and to drop all proceedings against them."

Every since President Mohamed Morsi's ouster on 3 July, the authorities have been persecuting news media and journalists regarded as hostile to the new regime. Arrests, prolonged detention and trumped up charges have all been used to gag news providers perceived as critical.

Egypt is ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.