

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypt-authorities-continue-to-detain-31-03-2014,46065.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Sham trial

Authorities continue to detain, prosecute journalists

31 March 2014

Amid continuing arrests and arbitrary prosecutions of media personnel, Reporters Without Borders reiterates its deep concern about the fate of the 20 *Al-Jazeera* journalists whose trial began on 20 February and continued today.

All 20 are charged with "broadcasting false information," while the 16 who are Egyptian are also charged with membership of a "terrorist organization" and "undermining national unity and social peace," and the four foreign journalists are also charged with abetting them by providing money, equipment and information.

Three of the 20 [have been held](#) in Cairo since 29 December. They are **Peter Greste**, who is Australian, **Mohamed Adel Fahmy**, who has Canadian and Egyptian dual citizenship, and **Baher Mohamed**, who is Egyptian.

During today's hearing, Greste and Fahmy [were able to speak directly](#) to the judge for the first time, reaffirming their innocence and denying any link with the Muslim Brotherhood or any terrorist organization. They also reiterated their request to be freed on bail, which the judge again denied.

The next hearing is scheduled for [10 April](#).

"The authorities must stop invoking the fight against terrorism in order to persecute dissident journalists," said Lucie Morillon, head of research and advocacy at Reporters Without Borders.

"We call on them to release all journalists who are being held on spurious grounds and to withdraw the proceedings against them. We also urge them to [respect the newly-adopted constitution](#) as well as Egypt's international obligations as regards freedom of information."

Concern about Al-Jazeera journalists' health

Fahmy's health is worrying. He has [a shoulder injury](#) that has not been treated properly and he can no longer move his right arm. His family has written to acting President Adly Mansour requesting his release so that he can get appropriate treatment.

Greste's parents also asked President Mansour to intercede on their son's behalf to get him released. In both cases, Mansour [expressed](#) his "understanding" but otherwise limited himself to reaffirming "the independence of the judiciary."

Other journalists on trial

Another *Al-Jazeera* employee, **Abdallah Al-Shami**, has been held since 14 August without any charge being brought against him. He began a hunger strike on 23 January in protest against his arbitrary detention, which was [extended](#) for another 45 days on 13 March.

A [military court](#) began trying several employees of the *Rassd news network*, including **Amro Al-Qazzaz** and **Islam Al-Homsi**, on 24 February on charges of divulging confidential information and insulting Field Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The judge reportedly refused to allow them to be defended by a lawyer at the first hearing. The trial is to [resume](#) on 2 April.

Two journalists have received jail terms in connection with their work in the past two weeks. They are **Samah Ibrahim**, a reporter for the daily *Al-Adala wa Al-Hurriya*, who was [sentenced](#) to a year of forced labour, and *Al-Shaab* photographer **Mohamed Ali Salah**, who [was given](#) a

three-year sentence.

At least 20 journalists are currently detained arbitrarily in Egypt, which is ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

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