

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypte-egyptian-authorities-to-put-20-al-30-01-2014,45803.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Persecution

Egyptian authorities to put 20 Al-Jazeera journalists on trial

29 January 2014

Reporters Without Borders is stunned and appalled by today's announcement by the Egyptian prosecutor's office that 20 *Al-Jazeera* journalists are to be prosecuted on charges of "undermining national unity and social peace" and "broadcasting false information."

RWB condemns this decision, calls for the withdrawal of all these charges and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all the journalists currently detained.

The harassment of the Qatar-based TV network and its journalists must stop. It is just deepening the divisions in Egypt's increasingly polarized society and is bringing further discredit on the Egyptian authorities in the eyes of international public opinion.

Sixteen of the 20 indicted *Al-Jazeera* journalists are Egyptians. The statement by the prosecutor's office said they are accused of membership of a "terrorist organization" – an allusion to deposed President Mohammed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood party – and "undermining national unity and social peace."

The four foreigners – two Britons, an Australian and a Dutch citizen – are accused of "collaborating with [these] Egyptians by provide them with money, equipment and information (...) and broadcasting unreal scenes to give the impression to the outside world that there is a civil war."

Only eight of the 20 are currently detained. The authorities are looking for the others. The statement by the prosecutor's office did not name the imprisoned journalists.

They include reporter **Peter Greste** (who is Australian), Cairo bureau chief **Mohamed Adel Fahmy** (who has Canadian and Egyptian dual citizenship), **Baher Mohamed** ([arrested in a Cairo hotel on 29 December](#)), **Abdallah Al-Shami** (arrested on 14 August) and **Mohamed Badr** ([arrested on 15 July](#)).

Persecution timeline

Ever since President Morsi's removal on 3 July 2013, the authorities have hounded news media and journalists suspected of direct or indirect links with Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, which was banned on 23 September and was declared a terrorist organization on 25 December.

On 3 July, the authorities [closed four local TV stations](#): *Misr 25*, which was operated by the Freedom and Justice Party (the Muslim Brotherhood), and *Al-Hafiz*, *Al-Nas* and *Rahma*, three stations that supported Morsi. In reaction to *Misr 25*'s closure, a new Egyptian station, *Ahrar 25*, was launched in mid-July.

On 5 July, Nilesat, the Egyptian telecommunications satellite operator, blocked three pan-Arab TV stations: *Al-Quds* and *Al-Aqsa* (Palestinian stations affiliated to Hamas), and *Al-Yarmouk*, a Muslim Brotherhood station based in Jordan.

In 20 August, police [raided the Cairo bureau of the *Ihlas News Agency \(IHA\)*, a privately-owned Turkish news agency](#), and arrested its bureau chief, **Tahir Osman Hamde**. He was held arbitrarily until 4 September. As relations between Turkey and Egypt declined, other Turkish media were also targeted by the Egyptian authorities.

On 28 August, the ministry of investment, information and communications technology and media declared *Al-Jazeera Mubasher Misr* (a Cairo-based *Al-Jazeera* affiliate) to be [illegal and forbidden to operate](#) in Egypt.

On 3 September, the administrative court of the State Council announced [the closure of four TV stations](#) (or their local bureaux) – *Al-Jazeera Mubasher Misr*, *Ahrar 25*, *Al-Quds* and *Al-Yarmouk* – for “threatening social peace,” “disseminating rumours and false, misleading reports” and inciting hatred and public disorder. This announcement confirmed measures already adopted arbitrarily.

On 10 September, the police raided the Cairo offices of Turkey’s state-owned *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT)*, seizing production equipment, computers and recordings. Under pressure from the authorities, *TRT* decided to temporarily suspend its operations in Egypt. **Metin Turan**, a *TRT* journalist arrested on 16 August, was released after 100 days in detention.

On 12 November, the head of the reportedly pro-Muslim Brotherhood *Rassd* news network was arrested at his home. The reason for his arrest and his place of detention are still unknown.

On 28 November, **Hani Salah Eddine**, the managing editor of the closed *Misr 25 TV channel*, was [stopped at Cairo airport](#) as he was about to board a flight to London. After responding to a summons to appear before the prosecutor-general, he was arrested on 1 December in an investigation into the “dissemination of mendacious information” and “inciting violence.”

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 35.7 kb)
-