

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/egypte-anti-muslim-brotherhood-witch-hunt-17-09-2014,46967.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Egypt

Totalitarian excesses

## Anti-Muslim Brotherhood witch-hunt exacts heavy toll

17 September 2014

Journalists are among the many detainees now on hunger strike

Far from the media attention and international support that three Al-Jazeera journalists received last June when given sentences ranging from seven to ten years in prison, other journalists are continuing to pay a high price for criticizing President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's government and its repressive policies.

They include **Imad Abu Zeid**, 49, the newspaper *Ahram Gate's* correspondent in Beni Suef (100 km south of Cairo), who was [sentenced by a Beni Suef criminal court to three years in prison](#) on 1 September on a charge of being a member of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Arrested in September 2013 for criticizing the July 2013 military coup on his Facebook page and in many reports for *Swef Online*, he was [held in a military prison for three months](#) before being released pending trial.

Like the 20 defendants convicted on 23 June at the end of the so-called "Marriott cell" trial, Zeid is one of the many victims of the Sisi regime's totalitarian tendencies.

More than 20 journalists and civil society activists have been detained without charge for working with news media affiliated or sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood since it was declared a terrorist organization in December 2013. Many of them have gone on hunger strike

*"The authorities are abusing the charge of Muslim Brotherhood membership to jail activists and news providers who oppose the new government,"* Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles said. *"This violates all international standards on human rights and freedom of information."* **Ahmed Gamal Ziyadah**, a photographer with *Yaqeen News Network* who has been held since 28 December 2013, announced on 25 August 2014 that he was joining the hunger strike many detained activists have been pursuing for weeks.

Arrested as a result of his coverage of clashes between police and Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Al-Azhar University, Ziyadah has been [held](#) ever since on charges of participating in an illegal demonstration, attacking police officers and carrying a firearm.

He is now one of a total of 60 detainees who are refusing to eat in order to protest against their arbitrary detention, torture, repeated postponement of their hearings and repeated prolongation of their pre-trial detention. [Dozens of activists](#) outside the prisons are also on hunger strike in sympathy.

The Egyptian journalists union announced last weekend that [10 journalists have joined the hunger strike](#).

Several political parties, including former presidential candidate Mohamed El-Baradei's Constitution Party, also [announced](#) last weekend that they were joining the hunger strike.

Ziyadah's brother, Mohamed Gamal Ziyadah, reported at a news conference on 7 September that [Ziyadah had been taken to a hospital](#) after becoming very ill. He also claimed that Ziyadah had been subjected to [physical violence](#) and that prison staff had pressured him to abandon his hunger strike, eliciting the response of "Freedom or death!" from Ziyadah.

**Alaa Abdel Fattah**, a well-known blogger and activist and one of the figureheads of the hunger strike movement, was finally [released on bail](#) on 15 September. He was sentenced in absentia last June – along with 24 other defendants – to 15 years in prison for violating the law on demonstrations.

This vast hunger strike movement speaks to the gravity of the human rights situation since Sisi

seized power. Violations of fundamental freedoms, including arrests, arbitrary and prolonged detention and torture, are widespread. Journalists are among those being targeted, to the detriment of freedom of information.

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