

Rundown of freedom of information violations in Egypt since the revolution

Journalists interrogated, arrested, convicted or killed

In a disturbing statement on 11 September, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces threatened to use the state of emergency law against all journalists who “jeopardize social peace.” Recent media freedom violations indicate that the authorities regard media personal as a “nuisance.”

Wael Mikhail, a cameraman with *Christian Dogma TV (Al-Tariq)*, was killed while covering rioting in Cairo’s Maspero neighbourhood on the night of 9 October.

Hassan Bahgat, a former army officer who used to head ABC’s Cairo bureau, was given a six-month suspended sentence by a military court on 17 August on a charge of “chanting anti-military slogans liable to defame the armed forces” in Tahrir Square on 6 August.

Rasha Azab, a reporter for the newspaper *Al-Fajr*, was charged on 19 June with “false information liable to disturb public security” in connection with an article. She is facing a possible jail sentence while her editor, **Adel Hammuda**, is facing a fine. When arrested while covering a protest in Tahrir Square on 9 March, she was handcuffed, insulted and slapped by police and was held for several hours in the nearby National Museum.

Hossam Al-Suwaifi, a reporter for the newspaper *Al-Wafd*, and **Sayyid Abdel Ati**, the editor of the newspaper’s weekly edition, were questioned by the military prosecutor’s office on 3 June about a 26 May article referring to a possible pact between the armed forces and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The blogger **Hossam Al-Hamalawy** and journalists **Rim Magued** and **Nabil Sharaf Al-Din** were interrogated on 31 May about their appearances on *ON-TV*. Speaking on Magued’s programme on 26 May, Al-Hamalawy had accused military police of violating human rights. The next day, Al-Din had talked about the chances of an alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and the army as part of a political transition.

The editor of the newspaper *Al-Shorooq*, **Amr Khajafa**, and two of his reporters were interrogated by a military court on 19 May for allegedly “publishing mendacious information and agitating public opinion” in an article about a possible amnesty for former President Mubarak.

Soldiers arrested an *Al-Jazeera* journalist in Cairo on 22 March while he was covering a demonstration outside the national TV station to demand the overhaul of its programming following President Mubarak’s removal.

Reporters have been the victims of bans prevented them from covering certain high-profile trials. On 11 September, for example, Judge Mustafa Hassan Abdullah banned the media and public from the court that is trying former senior officials for ordering men on camels to charge protesters in February. The press would not be allowed back until the verdict was announced, he ruled. On 7 September, Judge Ahmed Refaat barred journalists from the court that is trying former President Mubarak.

Journalists attacked

Reporters Without Borders has noted several case of physical violence against journalists. They include an attack by police officers on **Mahmoud Thabet**, the editor of the newspaper *Al-Masry*

Al Youm, on 16 April while he was filming a water pipe that had exploded. After stopping him from filming, the police hit him and confiscated his phone and camera. They then took him to a police station and accused him of causing a clash with the security forces.

Journalist **Ali Said** of the magazine *Radio wa Telvesa* was badly beaten by thugs on 30 March following the publication of an interview with the actress Yetimad Khurshid, widow of the secret police chief under former President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Netizens harassed

Alaa Abdelfattah, an influential blogger (<http://www.manalaa.net/>) and software developer, was incarcerated in central Cairo's Bab El Khalq prison on 30 October pending trial on a charge of inciting violence during the rioting on 9 and 10 October in Cairo's Maspero district. His request for release on bail was rejected by a Cairo military court on 3 November. He said on 5 November that he had turned down a semi-official offer of release in exchange for an undertaking to stop criticizing the armed forces.

Ayman Youssef Mansour, a netizen who was arrested in August, was sentenced by a Cairo court on 22 October to three years of forced labour on a charge of insulting, attacking and mocking Islam on Facebook.

The blogger **Asmaa Mahfouz** has also been subjected to judicial harassment. Several army officers filed a complaint against her before a military court on 8 October accusing her and fellow activist **Nour Ayman Nour** of insulting the Supreme Council during demonstrations in support of the detained blogger Maikel Nabil Sanad on 3 and 4 October. Mahfouz was already threatened with a trial by court martial on the same charge in August until a decision was taken to drop the case.

Imad Bazzi (@TrellaLB), a Lebanese blogger who has been writing the Trella.org blog (<http://www.trella.org>) since 1998 and is executive director of CyberACT, was denied entry at Cairo international airport on 5 September. He was questioned about his online activism by three plain-clothes men at the airport before being put on a flight back to Beirut. He said he thought his deportation was due to his friendship with the detained Egyptian blogger Maikel Nabil Sanad, whom he had visited two month earlier.

The blogger **Botheina Kamel** was summoned by a military court for interrogation on 15 May after she criticized the armed forces in a programme on *Nile TV*.

The blogger **Maikel Nabil Sanad** has been held since 28 March on a charge of insulting the armed forces. After repeated adjournments, a military court sentenced him to three years in prison on 10 April. The conviction was overturned on 11 October but a retrial began a week later and more adjournments followed. The next hearing is due on 13 November. Meanwhile, he is suffering from renal and neurological problems, anemia and other complications as a result of having been on a hunger strike for weeks. Attempts have been made to intimidate his family.

Media attacked or harassed by the authorities

Print media

Soldiers cut the power supply, phone lines and Internet connection to the offices of the newspaper *Al-Shorooq* on the night of 9 October, disrupting the production of its print version

and, for about 20 minutes, blocking access to its website, which was posting reports on the violent clashes taking place that night in the Cairo district of Maspero.

The state-owned Al-Ahram Press House refused to print the next day's issue of the pro-government newspaper *Rosa-I-Youssef* on 26 September, apparently because it had an article accusing ousted President Mubarak of having knowingly allowed an Israeli spy to operate in Egypt.

The same state printing press stopped printing the latest issue of the weekly *Sawt Al-Umma* on 24 September and scrapped all the copies that had already come off the press. The reason was an article by the journalist **Antar Abdel Latif** accusing the intelligence services of showing no interest in trying to solve any of the murders of demonstrators during the 18-day revolution.

Television

The headquarters of *Al-Hurra* and *Channel January 25*, two Cairo-based TV stations, were stormed by soldiers during the night of 9 October as they were broadcasting reports on the violent incidents that were taking place during a demonstration by Coptic Christians. The soldiers suspended their broadcasts until 1 a.m. and threatened journalists at gunpoint.

The General Authority for Investment and Free Trade Zones sent a warning to satellite TV station *ON TV* on 4 October accusing it of violating the terms of the Investment Guarantees and Incentives Act as regards programme content. A check would be carried out within 48 hours, said the agency, which issued *ON TV* with a broadcast licence in 2008. *ON TV* was previously told in December 2010 that it was complying with programme content rules.

The ministry of solidarity and social justice sent a similar warning to *Dream TV* because it retransmitted the 19 July edition of its talk-show *Al-Haqiqa* on 16 September, thereby allegedly violating the media Code of Conduct.

Plain-clothes police raided the offices of *Al-Jazeera Mubasher Misr (Al-Jazeera Live Egypt)*, located in the Cairo neighbourhood of Al-Agouza, for the second time in a month on 29 September, detaining the journalist **Mohamed Suleiman** for several hours and confiscating material without a warrant. The earlier raid was carried out on 11 September by culture ministry and public broadcasting agency personnel, who examined the station's official papers and seized mobile broadcasting equipment.

Information minister Osama Heikal decided on 7 September, after consulting with the Supreme Council, to temporarily suspend the granting of satellite TV licences to recent applicants. He said the freeze was needed to restore order to what he called the "increasingly chaotic media scene."

Dina Abd-Al Rahman was fired as a presenter of the *Dream TV* programme *Sabah Dream* on 25 July after she got into an argument with a former air force officer during a live broadcast.