



Defending Press Freedom For Over 60 Years

Journalists under siege

A report on IPI's emergency visit to Egypt

Summary

Three years to the day after demonstrations erupted on the streets of Egypt, a delegation from the International Press Institute (IPI) began a five-day emergency visit to Cairo to assess the media environment following the ouster of its democratically elected president in July 2013. The fact-finding trip emerged from concern that journalists were becoming an unacceptable target - if not outright scapegoats - for the tumultuous politics that engulfed Egypt after the Arab Spring, and particularly following the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power.

There was widespread concern expressed in conversations and interviews about a decline in the professionalism of news media in Egypt and sinking public faith in the veracity of the media's reporting. For their part, journalists are worried about personal safety, especially for photographers and cameramen whose equipment readily identifies their profession; heavy-handed police treatment and arbitrary arrests; and a general sense that the news media - even those with a history of independence - are becoming more partisan. Foreign and local journalists also said they were worried that they had become pawns in diplomatic skirmishes between Cairo and foreign governments openly critical of the Egyptian military's overthrow of the democratically elected Mohamed Morsi and violent crackdown on his Brotherhood movement.

With dozens of newspapers, news websites and other publications, plus a variety of national and regional television channels available through the partly state-owned Nilesat, Egypt has a relatively dynamic media market. Yet following a "burst of real freedom" after the Arab Spring in 2011, one foreign journalist said, the media have

gradually aligned themselves with either the Muslim Brotherhood - which won elections in 2012 and ruled for a year before being ousted and subsequently outlawed - or the military-backed interim authority that replaced the Brotherhood government on July 3, 2013. “The state media have returned to be a mouthpiece for the government, and so have most of the newspapers,” an Egyptian journalist said.¹ “The rest of us, we don’t know what to expect from day to day. We live in fear.”²

Such concerns are not without merit as very recent events show. On Jan. 25, 2014 freelance photographer Mohamed Helmy was shot to death while covering demonstrations marking the third anniversary of Egypt’s Arab Spring revolution. Journalists in Cairo told IPI that several of their colleagues were wounded during clashes on that day, which marked the start of demonstrations in 2011 that led to the ouster of long-time leader Hosni Mubarak. Four days later, the final day of IPI’s visit, Egypt’s public prosecutor announced that 20 journalists, including four foreigners, working for Al Jazeera would face trial on charges of terrorism and spreading “false news”. Sixteen were accused of joining a terrorist group and face up to 15 years in prison; four are charged with spreading false news and face up to three years in prison.³ Such arrests and the use of administrative detention powers that have allowed police and prosecutors to hold journalists for weeks and months without formal charges have fuelled the sense of fear amongst media workers, both foreign and domestic. “No one wants to see Egypt like Syria,” Farag Fathy Farag, a lawyer for one of the accused journalists, told IPI. The release of detained journalists would help ease some of the tensions, while at the same time the media needed to refrain from political sensationalism, he said.

Despite the challenges in Egypt, IPI sees the opportunity to hit the reset button on press freedom. Many of the journalists IPI delegates spoke to expressed solidarity when it came to ensuring the security of media workers and in opposing the arrest of journalists - often on trumpeted-up charges.⁴ The state-funded Syndicate of Egyptian Journalists has also been forceful in condemning arrests and detentions of journalists, warning in one statement that the security forces were repressing journalists in “an unprecedented manner”.⁵

Another promising development is the approval, in a Jan. 14-15, 2014 referendum, of an amended Constitution that strengthens guarantees of freedom of the press and expression and bans government interference in the news media. The constitutional

¹ Interview with Rana Allam, managing editor, *Daily News Egypt*, Jan. 27, 2014.

² Interviews cited in this report were conducted in person between Feb. 25 and 29, 2014 in Cairo.

³ “Egypt charges 20 journalists in disregard of its commitments”, IPI public statements, Jan. 30, 2014.

⁴ Al Jazeera cameraman Mohammed Badr, detained by the security forces for more than six months for allegedly carrying a handgun, was acquitted by a Cairo criminal court on Feb. 2, 2014. See: “IPI welcomes acquittal of Egyptian cameraman”, Feb. 3, 2014.

⁵ “Egypt Journalists' Syndicate warns police against crackdown on members”, Ahram Online, Jan. 28, 2014.

referendum - the third since the Arab Spring in 2011 - was approved by some 90 per cent of voters. The document's Articles 70, 71 and 72 provide guarantees of press freedom, freedom of publication and the independence of the news media, including protections against censorship, confiscation, suspension and closure of news media [Table 1]. It also requires the government to uphold all "agreements, covenants, and international conventions of human rights" that have been ratified by the country (Article 93).

Finally, during meetings in Cairo with government officials, the IPI delegation received assurances that steps would be taken to align Egyptian laws with the new constitution, and that the interim authorities were concerned about attacks on journalists, by both security forces and vigilantes. Whether those assurances are carried over to the new government that is expected to be elected in April 2014 (and is unlikely to lead to any major changes in Egypt's political direction⁶) is a matter of speculation. In the meantime, IPI's delegation is recommending the following steps be taken immediately by the government (with additional recommendations outlined later in this report):

- President Adly Mansour (previously head of the Supreme Constitutional Court) should publicly declare that attacks on journalists - either by street gangs, civilians or the police - are unacceptable and that perpetrators will be prosecuted. Similarly, the president should call on the Interior Ministry to ensure that police respond to threats against journalists and intervene when they are being targeted during demonstrations.
- The government should state publicly that it will abide by the letter and spirit of the new constitution - including Articles 70, 71 and 72 that provide guarantees of press freedom, freedom of publication and the independence of the news media, including protections against censorship, confiscation, suspension and closure of news media.
- The Interior Ministry, which oversees the non-military police and security services, should immediately establish an independent special prosecutor to investigate reports that police have beaten detained journalists or violated their rights of access to legal counsel.
- Civilian and military authorities should establish ongoing training for police and armed forces personnel in recognising accredited journalists as neutral, non-combatants in compliance with the country's international obligations.⁷
- Government authorities at the highest level must be held accountable for the illegal destruction, damage or confiscation of property belonging to journalists or news organisations.

⁶ Army Lieutenant General Abdelfattah Said Elsisy, later promoted to field marshal while also serving as deputy prime minister, removed Mohamed Morsi as president in July 2013 and is the clear front-runner to win the 2014 presidential election.

⁷ Egypt is bound by the Geneva Conventions, which says that the rights of non-combatants – including independent journalists – must be ensured.

Background

Egypt's newsstands have long been filled with dozens of newspapers and periodicals, but they have also have endured censorship and have been heavily reliant on the state for survival.⁸ Online news sites and satellite television have brought competition to the broadcast sector, including radio, which is still under government control. Social media played important roles in organising youth during the Arab Spring in 2011, driven by one of the highest rates of Internet usage in Africa, and continue to play a driving role in the politics that have ensued.⁹

But the environment for journalists and news organisations has become far more perilous since the military deposed the country's first democratically elected president, Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi, on July 3, 2013, and moved against his supporters. The post-Morsi crackdown was accompanied by bans on some media, attacks on media workers covering demonstrations, and the jailing of journalists. In a few cases, some of the estimated 1,100 foreign correspondents working in the country had their equipment confiscated and their offices ransacked.

In the weeks following the arrest of Morsi, Egyptian security forces rounded up numerous correspondents, freelancers and photographers. At least four journalists died in a single day, Aug. 14, 2013, when the police and military moved against pro-Morsi camps in Cairo and other cities. A foreigner was amongst the victims: Michael Deane, a cameraman for Britain's Sky News. The *Al-Ahram* newspaper reported that one of its correspondents, Tamer Abdel-Raouf, was shot dead as he and a colleague were passing a police checkpoint in the northern governorate of Beheira on Aug. 19, 2013.

Some broadcasters, amongst them the Egyptian affiliate of Al Jazeera (Mubasher Misr), were banned (although they continue to broadcast from foreign studios). The other stations closed include a channel affiliated with the Palestinian group Hamas, a network based in Jordan and another affiliated with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt's state news agency quoted administrative court authorities as saying that the stations were being operated illegally, without broadcasting licences. They were also accused of inciting violence and religious hatred.¹⁰ Egyptian courts also outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood, including media affiliated with it, the *Freedom and Justice* newspaper which carried the name of the Brotherhood's political wing.

Throughout these events, IPI expressed concern that journalists had become scapegoats for both the pro-Morsi camp and those favouring the interim government.

⁸ "One Year after Mubarak: Interview on Press Freedom with Egypt Independent Managing Editor Lina Attalah", IPI public statements, Feb. 13 2012.

⁹ Some 45% of Egyptians use the Internet, according to [International Telecommunications Union figures](#). Egypt also has more than 100 million mobile phone subscribers, exceeding its population of 81 million.

¹⁰ These points were emphasised by Egyptian government officials in justifying the closure of local offices, though they point out that the authorities did not interfere with satellite broadcasts of these stations.

The Egyptian security forces also deliberately targeted foreign journalists and international media, ransacking offices of some international news organisations.¹¹ As IPI Executive Director Alison Bethel McKenzie told a panel discussion in Geneva on Sept. 19, 2013, the military-led government “must be held responsible for the illegal destruction or confiscation of property belonging to journalists or news organisations. When it comes to respect for press freedom and individual rights of expression, the government must set the standard, and this should include respecting international laws on human rights and press freedom.”

The events of the summer of 2013 were a bit of *déjà vu* for Egypt. Protests against the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak began in January 2011 and spread rapidly. In one of the most dramatic events of the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia and engulfed many other countries in the region, Mubarak stepped down on Feb. 11, 2011, turning over power to a military council that vowed to hold democratic elections.

Parliamentary elections were held in November 2011, followed by a presidential contest in June 2012 that saw Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi become Egypt's first democratically elected president.

The honeymoon was short-lived. Morsi was accused of ignoring the country's stagnant economy, rising prices and high unemployment amongst the youth, whose concerns were also largely ignored under Mubarak, helping to ignite the anger that led to his ouster. As Sara Abou Bakr, political editor for the *Daily News Egypt* told IPI, the country's disgruntled youth have become the main opposition force.¹² Egypt's military, business and secular elite were also increasingly concerned about the Brotherhood leader's bent towards imposing religion in public institutions that had been largely secular under the previous military regimes. However, Morsi was slowly winning support amongst international partners in the United States and Europe, after early concerns that he would upset the country's strategic relations with Israel.¹³

Some two years after the anti-Mubarak protests, anti-Morsi demonstrations erupted in January 2013. They gained traction in June, with demands that he step down. Finally the military stepped in, deposing Morsi on July 3, 2013 and ordering the arrest of many of his top Brotherhood supporters. Yet pro-Morsi demonstrations grew, leading the military-backed transitional government to crack down on

¹¹ “[Foreign media targeted in Egypt](#)”, IPI public statements, Aug. 19, 2013.

¹² The interview took place on Jan. 27, 2014. [United Nations figures](#) show that as of 2010, some 60 per cent of Egypt's population is below the age of 29.

¹³ The [European Union](#) pledged millions of euros in development aid to Morsi soon after he took power. See [statement](#) from Commission President José Manuel Barroso of Sept. 9, 2012.

protesters and raid the camps they had set up around Cairo and other cities. More than 800 people were killed in outbreak of violence that began on Aug. 14, 2013.¹⁴

Egypt's partners, including the United States and European Union, struggled with a response as concerns rose over the prospects of another conflict - on top of the raging civil war in Syria, and lawlessness in Iraq and Libya - that could distract attention from negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. Ultimately, EU leaders threatened to halt some military exports while seeking assurances that democracy would be restored, while the Obama administration, already reeling from setbacks in its Syria policy, pressed for stability. Eventually, the United States suspended delivery of some weapons systems to Egypt pending a return to democracy, the State Department announced.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Egypt's interim government, led by a figurehead president, Adly Mansour (previously head of the Supreme Constitutional Court), pledged to hold a constitutional referendum and fresh elections in 2014, partly in an effort to assuage foreign concerns about the legitimacy of the transitional rulers. The army lieutenant general who announced Morsi's removal and became deputy prime minister during the transition, Abdelfattah Said Elsis, is the likely favourite in the forthcoming elections. The banning of the Muslim Brotherhood and provisions under the new constitution prohibiting religious parties has effectively defanged the opposition.

Several journalists were killed during the crackdown in Egypt, including Deane, a cameraman for Sky News, who was filming demonstrations on Aug. 14, 2013. Others who died that day were Habiba Ahmed Abd Elaziz, an Egyptian journalist, who was killed by gunfire in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square; Mosab el-Shami, a photojournalist for *Rassad News*, who died of gunshot wounds in Cairo; and Ahmed Abdel Gawad, a reporter for the *Al Akhbar* newspaper, was killed at Rabaa.

The *Al-Ahram* newspaper reported that one of its correspondents, Tamer Abdel-Raouf, was shot dead on Aug. 19, 2013 as he and a colleague, Hamed El-Barbary of *Al-Gomhoreya* newspaper, were passing a police checkpoint in the northern governorate of Beheira. El-Barbary was wounded, *Ahramonline* reported, saying that both men had been on assignment and were returning to their home base when police fired on their car.

Another journalist was killed during the upheaval just before Morsi was deposed, according to IPI's Death Watch tally. Salah Eddin Hassan, who worked for the *Shaab Misr* newspaper, was killed on June 28, 2013 when an unidentified person threw a home-made explosive device into a crowd of protesters, a security official and witnesses said.

¹⁴ "IPI calls for safety of journalists as Egypt roils", IPI public statements, Aug. 14, 2013.

¹⁵ U.S. State Department, *daily press briefing* of Oct. 9, 2014.

Following the summer events, the government continued to round up journalists deemed to be inciting unrest, and some broadcasters were banned. The media, like the Egyptian society, appeared polarised even as some semblance of calm was restored. A state of emergency imposed in August was gradually eased and the transitional rulers proceeded with a constitutional convention to draft amendments to the Morsi-era fundamental law.

On Jan. 14 and 15, 2014, Egyptian voters approved the amended Constitution that in theory strengthens guarantees of freedom of the press and expression and bans government interference in the news media. The constitutional referendum was the third since the 2011 Arab Spring. The new document's Articles 70, 71 and 72 provide guarantees of press freedom, freedom of publication and the independence of the news media, including protections against censorship, confiscation, suspension and closure of news media. The Constitution also requires the government to uphold all "agreements, covenants, and international conventions of human rights" that have been ratified by the country (Article 93), presumably binding the country to abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other signature obligations on press freedom.

But just days before the constitutional vote, on Dec. 29, 2013, security agents raided the Cairo Marriott Hotel and detained three journalists working for Al Jazeera's English service in connection with interviews they conducted with members of the banned Muslim Brotherhood. The journalists were Nairobi-based correspondent Peter Greste, English bureau chief Mohamed Fahmy and producer Bayer Mohamed. They were being held at the Tora prison in Cairo, Al Jazeera reported. The Interior Ministry also accused them of broadcasting illegally from a makeshift bureau at the Marriott, spreading "false news," "damaging national security," and possessing materials promoting "incitement". Al Jazeera's Sue Turton and Dominic Kane were accused of similar charges though both the Britons had already left Egypt.

At the time of the Dec. 29 arrests, other Al Jazeera journalists also were in custody. Among them, according to the network, correspondent Abdullah Al-Shami was detained on Aug. 14 while covering demonstrations in Cairo's Rabaa Square and Mubasher Misr cameraman Mohamed Badr was arrested on July 16 and held in indefinite detention in connection with an investigation into his coverage of clashes at Ramses Square. (Badr was acquitted by a Cairo criminal court on Feb. 2, 2014.¹⁶)

In response to the constitutional vote and the latest arrests of journalists, IPI on Jan. 16, 2014 urged the interim government to live up to the spirit of the newly approved fundamental law by freeing detained journalists and allowing banned media to resume their work. "We welcome the Egyptian people's decision on the new Constitution and urge the country's leaders to abide by the letter and spirit of the new fundamental law by respecting press freedom," IPI Press Freedom Manager Barbara

¹⁶ Mohammed Badr, an Al Jazeera cameraman, was acquitted by a Cairo court on Feb. 2, 2014, just after the IPI delegation's visit to Egypt. Just weeks earlier, Metin Turan of Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) was released after more than 100 days in jail.

Trionfi said in a statement after the vote. “They can demonstrate this commitment immediately by freeing journalists who are being held in detention, lifting restrictions on banned news media, and pledging thorough and independent investigations into the deaths of media workers during last year's unrest.”

Findings

For the purposes of this report, the delegation focused on the press freedom climate since July 2013 and in particular in the aftermath of the Aug. 14, 2013 move by security forces against pro-Morsi demonstrators.

An array of media, government and legal representatives interviewed by the IPI delegation largely came to the same conclusion, that mainstream media are sailing with the prevailing political winds, supporting the interim authorities and defending the removal of the Morsi government and the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood. Journalists themselves expressed concern that they were becoming more complacent in their reporting about the government and Egypt's complex political and economic challenges, and that the media increasingly practice self-censorship out of fear of offending the authorities, especially the powerful security services. Journalists generally agree that the quality of the news being reported has suffered in recent months after a spurt of freedom following the 2011 revolution.

“Egyptian journalists have always worked under self-censorship, but it has become worse ... and there are greater consequences for not censoring yourself,” said Rana Allam, managing editor of the *Daily News Egypt*.¹⁷ “Before [the government] would target high-profile journalists. Now it's anyone in journalism.” Hanan Solayman of the Mandara Media Foundation in Egypt, also said there has been a trend towards complacency. “It's disturbing to see how all media have suddenly become the same tone and anyone who may have a slightly different point of view is either cornered or frowned upon and labelled a traitor or an MB [Muslim Brotherhood] supporter,” she said.¹⁸

Newspapers face economic pressure as well, with advertising funnelled to publications that tout the government line. Advertisers bold enough to reach out to other media have faced threats from government representatives. “Opposition newspapers get no advertising,” Allam told IPI's delegation. When questioned about a large front-page advertisement on broadsheet, the editor responded: “That's for free.”

The feeling of insecurity and uncertainty expressed by journalists - foreign correspondents as well as Egyptians - is borne out by the handling of media, both by the police and security services and vigilantes. “When you carry a camera, recording

¹⁷ Interview of Jan. 27, 2014.

¹⁸ The comments were made in a Feb. 21, 2014 e-mail to IPI. The Mandara Media Foundation is planning its own report on the journalism environment in Egypt.

equipment or even a notebook, you are really exposing yourself now,” said one young journalist who said he has been roughed up on occasion. “It wasn’t like this before.”

Lack of police reform and awareness appears to be a major problem, with both Egyptian and foreign correspondents saying that officers often refuse to recognise government-issued press credentials. As political editor Sara Abou Bark explained, “The clampdown on journalists, particularly those who refuse to conform to the wishes of the current regime, is expanding. Police harassment is back in full force for many reasons, mainly the fact that the Ministry of Interior, which has authority over the Egyptian police force, has not seen any substantial reform since the 2011 revolution. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which governed in 2011; Morsi, who held power from 2012 to 2013; and current President Adly Mansour, together with Field Marshal Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, preserved the police force – which acted as the henchman of the Mubarak regime – as is. Thus, it is not surprising that the harassment of journalists has flourished.”¹⁹

Media workers and their advocates say journalists have become an easy target of frustration in Egypt’s politically volatile environment. Civilian vigilante groups have turned their wrath on photojournalists or correspondents wearing clothing identifying themselves as “press”. “Egyptians see a journalist as a traitor, someone who has an agenda and plot to destroy the country. The situation has deteriorated to the point that walking in the street with a camera is one of the most dangerous things”, Sergi Cabeza, a Spanish freelancer in Egypt, told the Media Diversity Institute, which is based in London and has offices in Cairo. “Journalists working in Cairo denounce the hostility and violent attacks they suffer not only from the security forces, but increasingly from civilians.”²⁰

Journalists have been detained by the police without cause, harassed by protesters and had equipment seized or destroyed. Al Jazeera and Turkish Radio and Television - news organisations accused by the government of siding with the ousted Brotherhood - have had their offices raided and equipment confiscated. Turkish television correspondent Tahir Osman Hamde was seized by the Egyptian authorities on Aug. 20, 2013, and security forces raided his office in a Cairo hotel, confiscating his computer and other equipment, the London senior production manager of the news agency, Ahu Kirimlioglu, told IPI.²¹ In one shocking display of propaganda, Egyptian authorities leaked videos of the Dec. 29, 2013 police raid on the Marriott hotel room used by Al Jazeera staffers, showing footage of the startled journalists as their room was searched and they were interrogated.²²

¹⁹ “The security vice and journalists in Egypt”, IPI guest blog by Sara Abou Bakr, Feb. 18, 2014

²⁰ “Easier to be a journalist in Syria than in Egypt”, Media Diversity Institute, Feb. 4, 2014.

²¹ “IPI presses Cairo for release of Turkish journalists”, IPI public statements, Aug. 21, 2014.

²² The video was widely available on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Dna2d91X8Y4

While foreign correspondents complained of occasional ham-handed treatment by the police, Egyptians have reported beatings and torture during captivity. In one incident reported by the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), which has documented abuses against journalists and human rights advocates, journalist Kareem Al-Behairi was “physically abused and treated violently” by the police following his arrest on Jan. 25, 2014 while covering demonstrations. Al-Behairi was being held at the Central Security Forces Camp where ANHRI reported that the police seized all his personal items and money and denied him access to a lawyer.²³

Given the grave threats journalists face in covering demonstrations, the government has nonetheless pursued a perverse policy of banning their use of body armour and other protective gear. Sebastian Backhaus, a German freelance photojournalist, was jailed for 20 hours under “awful conditions” for violating a curfew and not having a journalists’ permit, he told IPI after the August 2013 crackdown on pro-Morsi demonstrators. Backhaus said he was also arrested for wearing a bullet-proof vest and gas mask while taking photos during demonstrations on Aug. 14, 2013. He was told his protective gear was illegal.²⁴ There were also reports that female journalists were sexually assaulted or intimidated by mobs but are barred from carrying pepper spray or other self-defence measures.²⁵

Government requirements that all journalists working in Egypt carry state-issued accreditation presents another form of interference that IPI believes runs counter to press-freedom best practices. Government officials say the accreditation process is necessary to help shield journalists from intimidation by the security services. In reality, journalists told the IPI delegation that the police and military often ignore the press identification cards or - as journalist Mohannad Sabry told IPI - are not even aware of what they are.²⁶ Other journalists have said that getting a press pass from the government - indeed, getting credentials renewed - is not as easy as the government claims.

Journalists who lack accreditation face consequences, as Sue Turton, a British journalist for Al Jazeera, knows all too well. Turton is amongst those accused of aiding terrorism, but who left Egypt for Britain before she could be arrested. She wrote in the *Guardian*: “I knew I was reporting without government accreditation. Being granted such a pass had become increasingly difficult for us. Is not having

²³ [“Torture in Egypt Doesn’t Exclude Journalists, Students or Opinion Makers: When Will the Attorney General Open Urgent Investigation into Testimonies of Systematic Torture on Detainees?”](#), Arab Network for Human Rights Information, Feb. 11, 2014.

²⁴ [“Foreign media targeted in Egypt”](#), IPI public statement, Aug. 19, 2013.

²⁵ Conversations with female Egyptian journalists.

²⁶ Interview of Jan. 26, 2014.

accreditation a reason not to report a story? It's certainly not a reason to lock a reporter up for a day, never mind 40 days.”²⁷

Government officials deny there has been a deliberate targeting of journalists, either foreign or Egyptian. In some cases, senior officials such as the new head of the State Information Service (SIS), Ambassador Salah A. El-Sadek, have expressed regret about official and vigilante attacks on media workers and have called for sensible heads to prevail. El-Sadek told IPI that he has personally intervened to help journalists taken into custody by the police.²⁸

Nonetheless, journalists have been subject to charges of sedition and such capricious accusations as spreading “false news.” Employees of Al Jazeera have been leading targets of such charges. Al Jazeera broadcasts international news in English and Arabic via satellite and continues to run its banned Egyptian affiliate, Al Jazeera Mubasher Misra, from abroad - often using citizen journalists in Egypt. In Cairo, officials contend that the Qatar-based network that is partly funded by the government in Doha is being used as a proxy to oppose Egypt’s interim government, whose removal of Mohamed Morsi angered Qatari leaders. Some 20 photojournalists, correspondents and freelancers working for the Al Jazeera network have been detained, arrested or implicated on charges ranging from distributing “false news” to aiding terrorists. Their offices have been raided and equipment confiscated. While Al Jazeera is not alone - Turkish journalists have said they were unfairly targeted because of Ankara’s condemnation of the military-led removal of Morsi - the international broadcaster has engendered particularly harsh treatment. Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy referred to some of Al Jazeera’s reporting as “ludicrous”. “Al Jazeera has an agenda and is no longer credible,” he said, reflecting sentiments expressed by other Egyptian officials that the broadcaster's non-English news has been used as a mouthpiece for supporters of Morsi and the Brotherhood.²⁹

Mubasher Misra was accused of operating without a licence and SIS, which registers foreign media workers, complains that some Al Jazeera journalists - including those arrested on Dec. 29, 2013 - were not carrying press credentials as required by Egyptian law (charges not denied by Sue Turton and some defence lawyers). More than 1,100 foreigner journalists are registered with SIS and El-Sadek told IPI that “no [foreign] journalists have been denied accreditation.” But, he continued, “we never received the applications for credentials from the three Al Jazeera journalists” arrested by security agents at the Cairo Marriott Hotel. “We encourage a free press as long as you abide by our rules,” he said.³⁰ Asked if failing to register was a reason

²⁷ “Al Jazeera reporter: journalism is not terrorism and I’m not a terrorist”, *Guardian*, Feb. 7, 2014.

²⁸ Interview of Jan. 29, 2014.

²⁹ IPI delegation interview with Foreign Minister Fahmy, Egyptian Foreign Ministry, Cairo, Jan. 27, 2014.

³⁰ IPI delegation interview with Ambassador Salah A. El-Sadek at the State Information Service, Cairo, Jan. 28, 2014.

to arrest and detain journalists, he defended the actions against Al Jazeera staff, saying they were suspected of far more serious offences, including aiding terrorists.

Criticism of some reporting - but especially Al Jazeera's Egyptian and Arabic broadcasts - comes not just from government officials. Foreign and Egyptian journalists interviewed during the IPI visit also complained of bias and misinformation, particularly from the banned Mubasher Misra. "Their reporting is full of misinformation and is not credible," Rana Allam said. Max Rodenbeck, chief Middle East correspondent for *The Economist*, referred to Al Jazeera's now-banned Egyptian affiliate as "the Fox News of the Muslim Brotherhood," a reference to the American television network with a reputation for its arch-conservative news and chat programmes.³¹ But that in no way justifies the government's arrest and detention of Al Jazeera journalists, both journalists said. Indeed, several Egyptian newspaper columnists and the Syndicate of Egyptian Journalists have pressed the government to release Al Jazeera's jailed staff.³² "I personally don't condone some of Al Jazeera's reporting," said Yousra Omar El Farouk Azmy, who works for *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, a leading independent daily, "but I cannot accept that their journalists and cameramen are being unfairly targeted."³³

IPI is cognisant of the tremendous security, political and economic challenges facing Egypt, and deep divisions within the society. "It's been a difficult three years," Foreign Minister Fahmy told the IPI delegation. "No country in the world has two revolutions in two-and-a-half years and doesn't have problems." In one encouraging sign, the Foreign Minister also acknowledged that journalists should not be targeted by either the security services or the public. Indeed, the role of government is to provide security and set a higher standard by following its laws and international obligations. In the months since Egypt's second revolution, and despite the promise laid out in the new Constitution, the interim government thus far has failed to live up to that standard and respecting its national and international obligations to defend press freedom.

Recommendations

Based on meetings with a cross-section of media professionals, government officials and lawyers, IPI's delegation is recommending the following steps be taken:

To the interim government of Egypt:

- President Adly Mansour (previously head of the Supreme Constitutional Court) should publicly declare that attacks on journalists - either by street gangs, civilians or the police - are unacceptable and that perpetrators will be prosecuted. Similarly, the president should call on the Interior Ministry to ensure that police respond to

³¹ Interview of Jan. 26, 2014.

³² "[International journalists condemn detention of Al Jazeera news crew](#)", Daily News Egypt, Jan. 13, 2014.

³³ Interview of Jan. 26, 2014.

threats against journalists and intervene when they are being targeted during demonstrations.

- The government should state publicly that it will abide by the letter and spirit of the new constitution - including Articles 70, 71 and 72 that provide guarantees of press freedom, freedom of publication and the independence of the news media, including protections against censorship, confiscation, suspension and closure of news media.
- The Interior Ministry, which oversees the non-military police and security services, should immediately establish an independent special prosecutor to investigate reports that police have beaten detained journalists or violated their rights of access to legal counsel.
- Civilian and military authorities should establish ongoing training for police and armed forces personnel in recognising accredited journalists as neutral, non-combatants in compliance with the country's international obligations.³⁴
- Government authorities at the highest level must be held accountable for the illegal destruction, damage or confiscation of property belonging to journalists or news organisations.

To the news media:

- Egyptian journalists must refrain from partisanship or inflammatory reporting and dedicate themselves to pursuing in-depth, balanced reporting that is vital at a time of national transition.
- Journalists must unite to defend their rights under the new constitution, and to ensure that these principles are translated into law by holding public figures accountable.
- Media organisations should cooperate on journalist safety, through training as well as public-awareness campaigns about the importance of the media and news-gathering.

To the international community:

- Egypt is integral to regional stability and an important crossroad for commerce. The United States and European Union, leading sources of military and civilian aid, respectively, must use their influence - through financing and trade inducements - to ensure that the Egyptian authorities abide by their country's international commitments to press freedom, freedom of expression and human rights.³⁵

³⁴ Egypt is bound by the Geneva Conventions, which says that the rights of non-combatants – including independent journalists – must be ensured.

³⁵ Following the ouster of Morsi, the EU threatened to restrict the sales of some weapons and sent its foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, to meet with Morsi, who was then behind bars. Washington repeatedly urged Cairo to show restraint against Morsi supporters. On Feb. 4, 2014, the White House also said it had been in touch with Cairo about the treatment of journalists. "The restriction on freedom of expression in Egypt [is] a concern, and that includes the targeting of Egyptian and foreign journalists and academics simply for expressing their views", press secretary Jay Carney said in his [daily news briefing](#).

- The international community should further use its important influence with the military and security services to ensure that journalists are treated as neutrals during times of strife or public demonstrations.

About the IPI emergency visit to Egypt

IPI's emergency visit to Egypt took place Jan. 25-29, 2014, coinciding with the third anniversary of the 2011 Arab Spring revolution and just a week after the adoption of a new Constitution. The fact-finding trip emerged from concern that journalists were becoming an unacceptable target - if not outright scapegoats - for the tumultuous politics that engulfed Egypt after the Arab Spring, and particularly following the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power in July 2013.

The participants were:

- IPI Executive Director Alison Bethel McKenzie
- IPI Executive Board Chair Galina Sidorova, chairperson, Foundation for Investigative Journalism, Foundation 19/29, Russia
- IPI Executive Board Vice-Chair Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor-in-chief & CEO, Boishakhi TV, Bangladesh
- IPI Executive Board member Daoud Kuttub, director general, Community Media Network; founder, AmmanNet, Jordan
- IPI Executive Board member Kabiru Yusuf, chairman, Media Trust Ltd, Nigeria
- IPI Senior Press Freedom Advisor Timothy Spence

IPI's delegation interviewed more than a dozen people. These included foreign and local journalists, human rights advocates, NGO representatives, lawyers for two detained journalists, as well as Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy and the new chairman of the State Information System, Ambassador Salah A. El-Sadek.

IPI's expenses were partly funded by Al Jazeera, in response to its concerns that it was being unfairly targeted by the Egyptian authorities, although all interviews and meetings were arranged independent of Al Jazeera. This report reflects exclusively the views and findings of the IPI secretariat and mission delegation.

About IPI

IPI is a global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists dedicated to furthering and safeguarding press freedom, promoting the free flow of news and information, and improving the practices of journalism. Formed in 1950 at Columbia University by 34 leading editors from 15 countries on the belief that a free press would contribute to the creation of a better world, IPI today includes members in more than 120 countries and holds consultative status with the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

International Press Institute
Spiegelgasse 2/29
Vienna 1010
Austria

Telephone: +43 1 512 90 11

www.freemedia.at

Twitter: #globalfreemedia

Table I: Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt (2014)

Article 70	<p>Freedom of press and printing, along with paper, visual, audio and digital distribution is guaranteed. Every Egyptian -- whether natural or legal persons, public or private -- shall have the right to own and issue newspapers and establish visual, audio and digital media outlets.</p> <p>Newspapers may be issued once notification is given as regulated by law. The law shall regulate the procedures of establishing and owning visual and radio broadcast stations and online newspapers.</p>
Article 71	<p>It is prohibited to censor, confiscate, suspend or shut down Egyptian newspapers and media outlets in any way. By way of exception, they may be subject to limited censorship in times of war or general mobilization.</p> <p>No freedom-restricting penalty shall be imposed for publication or publicity crimes. As for crimes related to the incitement of violence, discrimination between citizens, or impingement of individual honor, the law shall stipulate the penalties thereafter.</p>
Article 72	<p>The state shall ensure the independence of all state-owned press institutions and media outlets, in a manner ensuring their neutrality and presentation of all political and intellectual opinions and trends as well as social interests; and also guaranteeing equality and equal opportunities in addressing public opinion.</p>
Article 93	<p>The state shall be bound by the international human rights agreements, covenants and conventions ratified by Egypt, and which shall have the force of law after publication in accordance with the prescribed conditions.</p>
	<p>Source: State Information Service (SIS).</p>

Table II: IPI Statements August 2013 - February 2014

14 Aug 2013	IPI calls for safety of journalists as Egypt roils At least two media workers killed, more wounded as security forces crack down on Muslim Brotherhood
19 Aug 2013	Foreign media targeted in Egypt IPI calls for end to 'deliberate targeting' of journalists by security forces, Muslim Brotherhood loyalists
21 Aug 2013	IPI presses Cairo for release of Turkish journalists Death toll for media workers rises to five as Egyptian reported shot dead at checkpoint
2 Sept 2013	IPI urges Egypt to release journalists Foreign media organisations report continued detention of media workers following deadly security operations
4 Sept 2013	Egypt orders four TV stations off the air Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr and other broadcasters ordered closed for alleged illegal operations
19 Sept 2013	IPI director condemns Egypt's 'efforts to silence news organisations' At event in Geneva, Bethel McKenzie says Cairo's arrests and ban on broadcasts violate international obligations
25 Sept 2013	IPI Executive Director to hold news conference on media freedom violations in Egypt Alison Bethel McKenzie and Al-Jazeera's Washington bureau chief to discuss Egypt situation on Sept. 27 at National Press Club in Washington
27 Sept 2013	IPI executive director presses US over media freedom violations in Egypt Bethel McKenzie says Egypt must release jailed journalists, end crackdown on media
21 Nov 2013	Impunity remains a scourge of journalists worldwide Nov. 23 a reminder that too many attacks continue to go unpunished
11 Dec 2013	Turkish journalists freed from prisons in Ankara, Cairo IPI welcomes release of Mustafa Balbay, Metin Turan
31 Dec 2013	IPI urges Egypt to release journalists Team detained Sunday accused of spreading 'false news'
16 Jan 2014	Egyptians approve new Constitution IPI urges government to respect new fundamental law's protections of press freedom
27 Jan 2014	IPI delegation makes emergency visit to Cairo Government urged to live up to the potential of new Constitution by freeing journalists
30 Jan 2014	Egypt charges 20 journalists in disregard of its commitments The country's new Constitution provides strong guarantees for press freedom
3 Feb 2014	IPI welcomes acquittal of Egyptian cameraman Calls for swift justice for 20 other journalists arrested in recent days
18 Feb 2014	Guest blog: The security vice and journalists in Egypt A free press, along with police reform and a just judiciary, are vital to the future
19 Feb 2014	Journalists await start of trials in Egypt IPI calls for terrorism-related charges against Egyptian and foreign news personnel to be dropped