



Her Excellency Soyata Maiga
Chairperson
African Commission on Human and People's Rights

&

His Excellency Lawrence Murugu Mute
Vice-Chairperson
and Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information
African Commission on Human and People's Rights

30 April 2019

Request for your good offices to ensure release of journalists from prisons in Egypt

Your excellencies,

The International Press Institute is a global network of editors, journalists and media executives that promotes freedom of the press and safety of journalists.

As the ACHPR is holding its 64 session in Egypt, we are writing to you to express our grave concern over the steady decline of media freedom, increasing harassment and incarceration of journalists, and threats against reporters and editors who challenge the government's narrative in Egypt.

Currently, Egypt is detaining a large number of journalists and media workers in its prisons, which makes the country one of the worst places for journalists to work.

Mr. Ismail Al Sayed Mohamed Omar Toufic aka Ismail Alexandrani has been held in prison without trial since November 29, 2015. He has been accused of belonging to a banned group and spreading false news. Currently the whereabouts of Alexandrani are unknown and the government of Egypt has refused to respond to requests about his well-being.

IPI member and Al Jazeera staffer Mr. Mahmoud Hussein has been in detention without charge since December 2016. His detention has been extended arbitrarily, and despite international appeals, the government has neither released Mr. Hussein or filed charges against him in the court allowing him a fair trial.

Authorities have not presented evidence of wrongdoing in these or other cases involving journalists held in pre-trial detention. Their detention is renewed periodically, usually every 45 days. In case of Mr. Toufic, after his time in pre-trial detention had elapsed in January 2018, he was referred to a military prosecutor – still without charges – instead of being released.

These and other detentions of journalists are unacceptable, as we firmly believe that freedom of the press is a fundamental pillar of any functioning state. A free and independent media is a bulwark of democracy, whereas in Egypt, which claims to embrace democratic values, critical voices are being silenced.



International
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Your excellency, as the Commission is holding its session in Egypt, we request you to use your good offices to urge President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi to release all detained journalists and make good on his promise to transform Egypt into a vibrant democracy.

Looking forward to a positive response.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Trionfi
Executive Director