

Media Monitor Egypt - 12

Bi-monthly report on the media situation
(May- June 2014)



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**Bi-monthly report on the media situation
During May and June 2014**



**Al Sawt Al Hurr
Arab Network for Media Support
www.asahnetwork.org**

Media Situation in Egypt: Twelfth report for the period May and June 2014

General Developments in the Egyptian Media

Preface

The Research Section of al Sawt al Hurr, the Arab Network for Media Support, produces the Media Monitor on a bi-monthly basis. These reports document and describe developments in the Egyptian media, such as the emergence or disappearance of media outlets (including satellite channels, newspapers and news websites), as well as developments pertaining to the enabling environment for Egyptian media, such as legal, economic, political and social developments that affect the dynamism, quality and diversity of the media landscape. With these reports, al Sawt al Hurr aims to provide media workers, researchers, academics and anyone interested in the field of media in Egypt with a systematic description and analysis of the rapid developments that take place in this sector.

General Developments

This report of the Media Monitor monitors recent developments in the Egyptian media sector, presented to readers with an interest in and some knowledge of the Egyptian media landscape.

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General Developments in the Egyptian Media

Media Situation in Egypt: Twelfth Report

for the Period May and June 2014

The aim of this report is to monitor the situation in the press and media in Egypt and analyse the developments that took place during the months of May and June 2014.

This report is produced by The Arab Network for Media Support, al Sawt al Hurr, and is the 12th issue in a series produced by this organization to provide media-professionals, researchers, journalists and anyone else interested in the Egyptian media with a comprehensive report that describes, monitors and analyses significant developments in the media during the previous two months.

In the first part of this report an overview of recent developments is provided and placed in certain sections.

1. Developments in the Media Sector in General

- The presidential elections dominated the media throughout the period of this report. Satellite TV channels broadcasted many live reports and talk hosts of the most popular talk-shows urged viewers to cast their votes, especially after the first day of the elections.
- During the time of this period there was a sharp decline in attention for violence against journalists because of the dominance of the presidential elections.
- The Ministry of Information was abandoned in the new cabinet that was formed after the elections. The new cabinet was sworn in and took the constitutional oath on June 17.

About 368 journalists have joined the competition for editor-in-chief positions of state owned media organizations. Al Ahram appeared to be the most popular with 113 applications, followed by al Ahkbar with 100 and al Gumhurria with 48 applications. The Dar al Helal media foundation received 35 applications; Rose al Yousef 21 and Dar al Marief received 10 applications. Middle East News Agency (MENA) had 5 applications.

Developments:

During the 13th session of the Arab Journalism Award, Egyptian journalists won awards in eight of the 13 categories. Ahmed Ragab won the award for best columnist, Yasser Rizk won the press dialogue award, Eman al Waraqi, Amr Bayoumi, Mustafa AbdulAzeem, Adel al Laqani, Mossad AbdulWahab and Shireef Salah were among the other Egyptians who won awards.



The Egyptian security forces confiscated issue no. 72 of *al Wasla* newspaper, which is published by *the Arab Network for Human Rights Information*, (ANHRI). The public prosecutor's office arrested workers of the organization and detained them for four days. ANHRI was charged with incitement against the government and promoting a terrorist group.

Editorial changes, policies, problems

The Board of Directories of *al Masry al Youm* on Saturday 3rd May 2014 chose the journalist Ali al Sayed as the new editor-in-chief of the newspaper. Mr. Al Sayed has succeeded the writer Mohamed Salmawi. Ali al Sayed worked as editorial secretary and editor-in-chief of *al Ahram's Nos al Donia* magazine and as editor-in-chief of *al Ahram's* central desk.

On Monday 19th May *al Masry al Youm* removed an article from its website by Dr. Nasar Abdullah, professor of philosophy at Sohag University, "homeless children: the Brazilian solution", after it provoked strong protests from its readers. The privately owned newspaper remarked that it removed the article on the advice of its legal consultants, as the article could be seen as an invitation to murder street children.



Demonstrations and protests

Journalists of *al Badil* independent newspaper began an open sit-in on May 12, 2014 at the premises of the Journalists Syndicate because this organization refused to accept registration of their application papers. The sit-in continued for 38 days before *al Badil* journalists suspended it and General Secretary of the Syndicate Karim Mahmoud told them, that a decision on the newspaper's situation will be taken once the board of the syndicate received a reply to its request to the "Social Insurance Authority" for confirmation of their contract status. The Syndicate's committee for "under-training" registration refused to accept registration of the journalists of *al Badil* and *al Masry al Youm*, claiming irregularities in the issue of *al Badil* and problems with hiring of some journalists at *al Masry al Youm*.

Numerous journalists organized marches in front of the Syndicate and the Counsel of Ministries to demand their reinstatement. They were dismissed after having worked on temporary contracts for *al Ahram* and *al Akbar*. Some of them had worked for these institutions for many years and had received regular monthly bonuses.

Legal entanglements

The Supreme Judiciary Council referred Hisham Geneina, head of Egypt's Central Auditing Agency; Magdy al Galad and Mohamed al Sanhoury, both at *al Masry al Youm*, to the Cairo Criminal Court for a re-trial of a case on allegedly insulting the Egyptian Judges' Club and its head Ahmed al Zend. In an interview with *al Masry al Youm* early last year, Geneina, who at the time was serving as head of Egypt's Court of Cassation, slammed last year's Judges' Club elections as "ridiculous." He accused al Zend of tarnishing the image of Egypt's judiciary, illegally amassing large amounts of money and abusing his position to obtain property on Egypt's north coast. Magdy al Galad, who was editor in chief of *al Masry al Youm* at the time the interview was published (January 16th 2012) was accused of failing to remove parts of the interview deemed to be "in violation with the law."

On Monday 16th June Journalist Abdullah al Shami was released on health grounds. Security forces had arrested him on August 14



2013, while reporting on the dispersal of the sit-in at Raba' al Adawiya square.

Dot Masr Website Photojournalist Rokya Nashaat was rreleased on 19th May, after she was arrested as day earlier by Egyptian security forces while she was covering an event for supporting the detainees in front of South Giza Court.*ts of violence against journalists and media organizations*

The security forces arrested Abdul-Rahman Shahin, the correspondent of *al Jazeera*, *Hurriya wa Adela* newspaper and *Misr 25*, in the city of Suez on May 9, 2014 on charges of assaulting citizens, inciting and participating in acts of violence, assaulting security officials and setting fire to police vehicles. The public prosecutor in Suez decided to imprison him for 15 days pending investigations at the time of writing this report.

3. Multimedia trends and media interactivity

According to Alexa <https://www.alexa.com>, the news websites were classified whether private or owned by the state among 30 websites that had the most visits: Youm7, al Masry al Youm, al Bawaba News and al Watan.

Activists started a hash#tag on twitter under the title “Support the launch of *al Thawrah channel*”, because they want a satellite TV channel in support of the revolutionaries and the Egyptian revolution. The revolutionaries suggested opening a bank account to pay for the launch of the channel and its management. Some activists suggested inviting prominent and well-known media-professionals to join this channel. Other activists expressed their doubts that the authorities would approve such a channel and stated the channel should be launched without waiting for government permission.

The owners of the online radio projects of independent youth groups, in cooperation with the *Support for Information Technology Centre (SITC)*, commemorated the 80th anniversary of the shutdown of public radio. They allocated a day to blogging and writing about public radio and its history from hash#tag # على_الهوا which means #on_air.

The *Arab Network for Media Support “al Sawt al Hurr”*, in cooperation with the *Support for Information Technology Centre*, organized a weeklong social media campaign from May 3h on press freedom and ethical aspects of photo-journalism on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day (May 3rd). Journalists and other concerned citizens were invited to comment on these issues via hash#tag “We want_media” via the twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Contributors could write personal blogs and share these on social networks using the same hash#tag, to create an open forum for communication between producers and consumers of media services to encourage audiences to participate in assessing the quality of media-messages and policies and to contribute to drafting messages according to their interests.

4. Independent news websites

www.dotmasr.com

The *Dotmasr* website was launched end of May, with much publicity. The new website has attracted a number of accomplished journalists with experience with newspaper journalism and independent news websites, including Khaled al Baramawy (editorial director), Haitham Dabour (deputy editor), Mustafa Abdul Rahman (assistant editor), Kareem Shinawi (creative director).

In addition to the unique style in writing news and features, Dotmasr presents a new interactivity service, called *Dot TV*, with snapshots from the Egyptian streets uploaded to the website, with people's reactions to the current political and social situation, etc.



5. Egyptian Radio and TV Union

ERTU, which is directly supervised by the Ministry of Information, broadcasts some 435 TV channel in addition to more than 101 radio channels, covering North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf.

A number of media-professionals and activists started an online campaign under the name “We demand and end to the agreement between Maspero and MBC”. The group demanded Minister of Information Doria Sharaf al Deen to terminate the contract with the advertisement agent of MBC, the Lebanese Pierre Shiwary.

- A memorandum of understanding was signed between ERTU and MBC under the patronage of the Minister of Information to establish partnership and cooperation between the major media-foundations. The cooperation will involve several media activities including the programmatic cooperation, which will open the door to an exchange of certain program formats, joint ownership of intellectual property rights, production and broadcasting.

The Iraqi Authority of Media and Telecommunication decided to shut down the two Iraqi channels *al Bagdadiyah* and *al Rafdaien*. The president of the authority, Safa'a al Deen Rabie during a press conference held on Wednesday June 18th, said that the Egyptian authorities informed him that they have decided to shutdown both channels, where their programs were aired from Cairo.



6. Commercial / satellite TV

Nilesat broadcast about 700 television channels and more than 100 digital radio channels. The percentage of non-encrypted TV channels to about 76% of the total number of channels, while the rest is encrypted

Dr. Adli Reda, Chairman of the “*Committee for the Monitoring, Evaluation & Analysis of media performance and advertising during the Presidential Elections*”, called on all audio-visual media, both state and privately owned, to abide by the professional standards and respect the period of electoral silence. The Committee filed an official complaint with counsellor Abdul-Aziz Salman, head of the “*Supreme Committee for Presidential Elections*”, and the “*Investment Authority*”, with the aim of punishing *Sada el Balad* satellite TV channel for disrespecting both the electoral silence and the professional standards in its style of reporting, comparing presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabahi to «Okal». According to the Committee, this was the only breach reported during the agreed period of pre-electoral silence. The committee also produced a report on the performance of the media during the period following the elections. It concluded that programs on some satellite TV channels were biased towards one of the candidates, such as *al Qaherah wa al Nas*, *Sada al Balad*, *Fardeen*, *Mehwar*, *Tahrir*, *ONTV*, *CBC* and *al Nahar*. Some TV anchors showed a bias towards one of the candidates and did not even attempt to balance different points of view during discussions on their programs. It was also noted that some programs provided space, air time and focus for one of the candidates while completely ignoring other candidate.

Many satellite channels broadcasted detailed results of the voting of Egyptians abroad, including news feeds, which affected public opinion inside Egypt on the election process.

7. Freedom of expression

The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) launched its annual report “The state of freedom of expression in Egypt” and confirmed that 2013 was the worst year in the last five years, with regard to violations of freedom of expression.

This 2013 report is the first of its kind and it monitored the violations of freedom of expression during the year 2013. The report focused on freedom of the press and other media; freedom of artistic expression; freedom of re-

ligious beliefs; freedom of expression on the internet, student and academic freedoms and the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration.

In 2013 Egyptian courts and investigation authorities handled many cases related to freedom of expression in a various forms. The AFTE report concluded that the violent political transformations, which the country experienced during 2013, negatively impacted upon the status of freedom of thought and expression. According to the report, freedom of the media has always been the target of those in charge of violations. The press and media environment has witnessed a large number of them, and cases of legal prosecution reached 38 to 57 cameras of photojournalists were smashed



The use of force against journalists and media-professionals, lead to 7 deaths, 43 cases of injuries by rubber or a live ammunition; 3 cases of suffocation from tear gas and 115 cases of physical abuse. The monitoring included in the report refers to multiple sources of these abuses, from parties, political groups, individuals and government agencies that detained 30 journalists, prevented 4 journalists from doing their work, prevented 6 broadcast of media organizations and raided the headquarters of 6 media organizations.

Regarding freedom of digital expression and the freedom to disseminate and receive information in any form via digital means, the report states that 2013 saw two types of lawsuits. Appeals made by citizens and lawsuits filed by the Ministry of Interior. The most prominent lawsuit in 2013 dealt with the closure of <YouTube> for showing some sections of a movie that is known in the media as «The movie offending the Prophet» or «Innocence of Muslims”.

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) issued its annual report on freedom of expression in Egypt and the Arab world in 2013, on the occasion of *World Press Freedom Day*. This report examined the situation around freedom of expression and press freedom in 14 Arab countries. It also added three qualitative studies on the case of *the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association* in Saudi Arabia, the court cases on Twitter in Kuwait and the case of the 94 reformers in the United Arab Emirates.

The report includes examples of the violations endured by freedom of expression and freedom of press in the Arab world during 2013. The violations listed are numerous and diverse, but the report estimates that the actual number of violations may have reached more than twice the number listed

and that this is a mere fraction of the number of violations that has become routine under a government that lacks democracy and that intensifies repression as a reaction to increased criticism and detection.”

Reporters without Borders reviewed the outcome of court cases against media and media-professionals and the general situation of freedom of the media under the rule of the former commander of the Egyptian armed forces during the last eleven months. Lucia Morrilton, director of research at *Reporters without Borders*, stressed that “the state of freedom of the press has deteriorated significantly since the military came to power: 65 journalists were arrested in a period of less than one year, while 17 media-professionals are still in custody”. She also urged the Egyptian authorities...”to respect the new constitution which guarantees the freedom of the press and the need for an immediate release of all journalists currently detained, with annulment of all the charges brought against the media.”

Three journalists from *al Jazeera English*, Mohamed Filmy, Peter Greets and Bather Mohamed were brought to court on charges of airing false news and assisting a terrorist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood. The three were arrested in Cairo last December while covering the aftermath of the army’s removal of Mohamed Morsi from the presidency in July. On 23rd June, Greets and Filmy were sentenced to seven years in prison. Mohamed was sentenced to an additional three years for possession of ammunition. Dominic Kane and Sue Burton, two other Al Jazeera journalists were sentenced in absentia to 10 years.



8. Access to information

The “Transparency and Questioning” program of the *Support for Information Technology Centre (SITC)* called for a blogging day to shed light on the work of fact-finding committees in Egypt since the revolution of January 25, 2011 along with important international experiences. (Hashtag #fact-finding). Attention was also given to the right of access to information. Results of the campaign day were presented to the public to ensure people’s right to know about the real actors and to hold them accountable – even if only morally – for their corruption or violations.

9. State and government institutions and the media

Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehlab, stated on Monday June 16 “the Ministry of Information has

been abolished and will not return in the new government”. Emad al Deen Hussein, Editor-in-Chief of *al Shorouk* commented that its abolishment is a means not an end in itself. The abolishment of the Ministry of Information was demanded by almost everyone for many years, in the hope that its abolishment would result in strong independent media institutions who serve the people of all persuasions/opinions; not just the government or the presidency.

10. The Supreme Press Council

Mohamed Salami, the undersecretary of the Supreme Press Council, announced that the council is preparing proposals for the organization (regulation) of the press and media in Egypt for presentation to and approval of the coming parliament.

Article 211 of the new constitution states that “The Supreme Council for the Regulation of Media is an independent entity that has a legal status which enjoys technical, financial and administrative independence, and has its own budget.” The Council will have the competence to regulate the affairs of audio and visual media and regulate the printed and digital press and other forms of media.



Article 212 states that The National Press Organization is an independent entity that shall manage and develop state-owned press institutions and their assets, as well as ensuring their modernization, independence, neutrality and their adherence to good professional, administrative and economic standards. The law shall determine the composition and regulations of the entity and the employment conditions for its staff. It shall be consulted with respect to the bills and regulations pertaining to its scope of work.

Article 213 states that; The National Media Organization is an independent organization that shall manage and develop state - owned visual, audio and digital media outlets and their assets, as well as ensuring their development, independence, neutrality and their adherence to good professional, administrative and economic standards.

11. Journalism organisations

The Journalism Syndicate created an Operations Room in order to closely follow the presidential elections in all governorates of the country and to assist journalists in case of problems.

The Operations Room of the Journalists Syndicate, which was created to follow the presidential elections, deployed 27 observers in all governorates, with whom it would stay in regular contact. Their task was to report on the press coverage of the electoral process from the viewpoint of the journalists,

and not the election itself. The Operations Room of the Syndicate offered support to journalists with complaints and in case of any problems that may face which could hinder the performance of their duties during the work.

The Operations Room actively communicated with those responsible for facilitating the election process and managed to solve most problems. Amal Alam, journalist Youm7, was interrogated by the public prosecutor in the presence of one of the members of the Syndicate. In another case, the public prosecutor's office had Emad abuGabal, journalist of *Veto*, independent newspaper and website, imprisoned for 4 days, while investigating claims that the journalist personified a district attorney. AbuGamal filed a report against those who brought such charges against him. This case is now also under investigation by the public prosecutor's office.

The Board of the Syndicate condemned the repeated instances of assault and defamation against its institution and promised to hold those responsible accountable, according to the law and its internal Code of Ethics. In a statement, the Board of the Syndicate called these violations and practices on the part of individuals and the management of some newspapers, some which are even affiliated to the syndicate, unacceptable and a serious and unprecedented phenomenon. It confirmed that it will take all necessary legal action to ensure that abusers are held accountable for their actions, regardless of their positions. The Board also called on all parties to respect the law and the Code of Ethics.

According to the Press Syndicate, the number of cases of violations against journalist and cases in which journalists were prevented from doing their work reached 29 in de period from the start of the elections until midday of the second day of the elections.

Khaled al Bal shy, board member of the Journalists Syndicate, said that the Syndicate will not accept the application papers of journalists from *al Dust our*, a privately owned newspaper, as long as the serious problem of the suspension of *al Dust our* journalists of still continues. He added that the management of *al Dustour* has to settle and solve their problems before these application papers can be accepted by the syndicate's registration committee, stressing that the case will remain pending until a new decision by the President of the Board of Directors of *al Dustour* will be issued.

The problem with *al Dustour* newspaper has been caused by the decision to terminate the work contract of the journalist Osama Mohammed De'bis, who was then prevented from entering the newspaper's office, which he considered a violation of the law, since he claims to have all the papers and documents that prove his eligibility to return to work, and receive all his dues. A spokesman of *al Dustour* referred to the statement of the Board of the Syndicate on May 21, 2013 in which the suspension of registration of the newspaper was announced.

12. Attention to the media from the side of civil society organisations

A group of civil society organizations in a statement on May 4 expressed concerns about the disappearance of *al Jazeera* correspondent Abdallah al Shami, demanding that the Ministry of Interior to immediately reveal the location of his imprisonment, after his family and his lawyer failed to find it. The organizations called for the provision of medical care for the

journalist, who urgently needs hospitalization, after a sharp deterioration of his health as a result of a hunger strike that has already lasted more than 114 days. The hunger strike started in protest of the fact that he has been kept in custody without trial since August 14, 2013. Signatories to the statement include the *Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression*, *Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies*, *the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, *the Arab Network for Human Rights Information*, *Legal Assistance Group for Human Rights*, *Nadim Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture* and *Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence*.

The *Arab Program for Human Rights Activists*, expressed its deep concern and annoyance over the confiscation of its publication “*al Wasla*”, the confiscation of equipment of the publishing house and the arrest of a worker, without allowing ANHRI’s lawyer to review the report or the Public Prosecution warrant.

The *Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ)*, based in Washington DC, called on the candidates for the presidency, Abdel Fattah al Sisi and Hamdeen Sabahi to take a number of actions, after winning the presidential elections. Suggested actions include a thorough investigation into the 10 journalists that have been killed since 2011 and holding the perpetrators of these crimes accountable, as well as investigating the imprisonment of 16 journalists without legal justification and to ensure their release. The Committee, in a declaration sent to the presidential candidates, expressed concern about the situation with regard to the freedom of the press in Egypt, pointing out that Egyptian journalists have not been subjected to this level of threats since the committee’s establishment in 1981, which has resulted in attacks, imprisonment and even death.

The Committee attached to its letter a list with the names of 16 journalists, who the investigations of the *CPJ* say, are currently being held in detention in Egypt. The committee monitored the cases of at least ten journalists, who were killed while performing their work in 2011 and six others killed since the removal of the former President Mohamed Morsi in 2013. The letter goes on to point out that only one journalist was killed in Egypt during the twenty years that preceded 2011. Copies of this documentation were sent to the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General.

The *Support for Information Technology Centre* issued a new report entitled “Violated freedom: practices and policies restricting media freedom in Egypt 2013”. The report reveals policies adopted by the government to restrict the freedom of the media, whether by closing some private channels or multiple styles of control, or the direction of the state regarding the prosecution of journalists and putting journalists on military trials. The report attempts to identify the policies that led to the occurrence of violations, in general, against journalists and media organizations in 2013. It also attempts to identify the repeated patterns of violations of the freedom of individuals in news circulation, broadcasting their opinions through any media means, including media-professionals. Individuals who sought to cover the events independently, or who published opinions were, as a result subjected to direct violations. As well as listing violations that took place against media organizations, this report is an attempt to and document the state of the media in Egypt and practices and policies restricting the freedom and independence of the media’s work in 2013.