

Rights organizations condemn spate of Egyptian journalist arrests, demand immediate release, accountability

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), along with 34 rights and press freedom organizations, condemns the recent arrests and [enforced disappearance](#) of four Egyptian journalists – Ashraf Omar, Khaled Mamdouh, Ramadan Gouida, and Yasser Abu Al-Ela – and calls for their immediate release.

The undersigned also call on Egyptian authorities to drop all charges against the journalists, stop targeting them for their work, end the practice of concealing the status or location of those in custody, swiftly and transparently investigate allegations that at least two of the journalists were tortured or treated inhumanely, and hold those responsible to account.

The list of arrested journalists and the violations against them includes:

- [Ashraf Omar](#), a cartoonist for the independent news outlet Al-Manassa, was [arrested](#) on July 22, 2024, and taken to an unknown location for two days. He appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) on July 24, where he was [charged](#) with offenses that include joining a terrorist group with knowledge of its purposes, spreading false news, and misusing social media. The SSSP also questioned Omar about his cartoons on Egypt's economic conditions and the country's electricity shortage, according to Al-Manassa. Omar's wife [reported](#) that he was tortured, subjected to beating, and threatened with electric shocks during his enforced disappearance. The security authorities [noted](#) in the official arrest report that Omar was arrested on July 24, in an apparent attempt to cover up the two days of his disappearance, according to the Cairo-based human rights organization, Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE). On September 1, the SSSP [renewed](#) Omar's detention for an additional 15 days pending investigation in Case No. 1968 of 2024 (Supreme State Security).
- [Khaled Mamdouh](#), a journalist for the independent news website Arabic Post, was [arrested](#) on July 16 and taken to an unknown location. During his arrest, his eldest son was physically [assaulted](#) by security forces, and his electronic devices, including his laptop and mobile phone, were seized. After six days of enforced disappearance, Mamdouh appeared before the SSSP on July 21. The SSSP [charged](#) him with joining a terrorist group with knowledge of its purposes, financing a terrorist group, and spreading false news. Mamdouh's arrest report was [dated](#) July 20, not the date of his actual arrest on July 16, in what AFTE also believes was an apparent attempt to cover up his enforced disappearance. On August 26, the SSSP [renewed](#) Mamdouh's detention for an additional 15 days pending investigation in Case No. 1282 of 2024 (Supreme State Security).
- Ramadan Gouida, a journalist for the independent Al-Youm news website, was [arrested](#) on May 1 while on his way home in the Menofia Governorate and taken to an unknown

location. After 40 days of enforced disappearance, he appeared before the SSSP, which [accused](#) him of joining a terrorist organization and spreading false news. His wife reported that Gouida's arrest resulted from his name being mentioned during an interrogation of another journalist who previously worked with Gouida at the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated media outlet Freedom and Justice News in 2012. On August 26, the SSSP [renewed](#) Gouida's detention for an additional 15 days pending investigation in Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security).

- Yasser Abu Al-Ela, a journalist and member of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, was arrested on March 10 and taken to an [unknown location](#). During his interrogation before the SSSP, Abu Al-Ela informed the prosecutor that he had been [subjected](#) to physical and psychological torture during the 50 days of his enforced disappearance, according to The New Arab. His wife, Naglaa Fathi, and her sister were [detained](#) on April 27 at an unknown location for 13 days after filing several complaints with Egyptian authorities about her husband's disappearance. Later, both women were [charged](#) with joining a terrorist organization and spreading false information on Facebook. On August 25, the SSSP [renewed](#) Abu Al-Ela's detention for an additional 15 days pending investigation in Case No. 1568 of 2024 (Supreme State Security). During the renewal session, Abu Al-Ela declared that he would begin a [hunger strike](#) to protest his treatment in prison, which includes solitary confinement, a ban on family visits, and restrictions on leaving his cell during designated times.

The arrest of the four journalists has sparked a wave of fear and trauma among Egyptian journalists that CPJ has interviewed, particularly those who had been detained previously or had worked with Arabic Post, where Mamdouh was employed. On August 21, journalist Moataz Wadnan, who was [arrested](#) in February 2018 while working as a reporter for Arabic Post — known as HuffPost Arabi at the time of his arrest — and released in July 2021, [wrote](#) on his Facebook account that he left Egypt “in search of safety and stability, fearing a repeat of the detention.” Since he left last month, the Egyptian security forces have raided his home twice, searching for him.

In addition to these four journalists, authorities are also holding 11 other journalists, many of whom have been in custody for longer than the two-year legal limit for pretrial detention. Furthermore, authorities are using various tactics to curtail press freedom in the country, including [banning](#) independent media websites, employing the law to legally [harass](#) journalists and media outlets, and targeting [Egyptian journalists](#) in exile and their [family members](#) in Egypt.

The signatories to this statement call on Egypt to comply with its [constitution](#), which guarantees freedom of the press and prohibits custodial sanctions against publishers. In addition to releasing all imprisoned journalists and dropping false charges, the government must stop [blocking news websites](#) and refrain from targeting Egyptian journalists and their family members within the country [and abroad](#).

This new spate of arrests highlights the shameful record of the Egyptian authorities in targeting journalists and independent media, underscoring why Egypt has remained among the [top 10 jailers](#) of journalists worldwide in recent years, according to CPJ data. The arrests also demonstrate how enforced disappearance and torture have become common practices by the Egyptian security forces against journalists and others. The Egyptian government must take the steps outlined above to end this recent resurgence of repression against journalists and their families and commit to ensuring a free and vibrant press throughout the country.

Signed:

- 1-ARTICLE 19
- 2-Artists at Risk Connection (ARC)
- 3-Association of Canadian Cartoonists
- 4-Australian Cartoonists Association
- 5-Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- 6-Cartoon Movement
- 7-Cartooning for Peace
- 8-Cartoonists Rights Network International
- 9-Committee for Justice
- 10-Committee to Protect Journalists
- 11-Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- 12-Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- 13-Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- 14-Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- 15-Egyptian Observatory for Journalism and Media (EOJM)
- 16-EuroMed Rights
- 17-European Cartoon Award
- 18-Forum for Humor and the Law
- 19-Freedom Cartoonists Foundation
- 20-Freemuse
- 21-Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
- 22-HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- 23-Human Rights First
- 24-IFEX
- 25-Index on Censorship
- 26-Khartoon Magazine (khartoonmag.com)
- 27-Law and democracy support foundation
- 28-Middle East Democracy Center
- 29-PEN America
- 30-Professional Cartoonists' Organisation (PCO)
- 31-Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- 32-Samir Kassir Foundation
- 33-The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- 34-Toons Mag
- 35-World War 3 Illustrated