November 17, 2026

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| **The Honorable Dave McCormick**<br>Chairman<br>Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism<br>Committee on Foreign Relations<br>United States Senate<br>Washington, DC 20510 | **The Honorable Jacky Rosen**<br>Ranking Member<br>Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism<br>Committee on Foreign Relations<br>United States Senate<br>Washington, DC 20510 |
| **The Honorable Mike Lawler**<br>Chairman<br>Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa<br>Committee on Foreign Affairs<br>U.S. House of Representatives<br>Washington, DC 20515 | **The Honorable Jared Moskowitz**<br>Ranking Member<br>Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa<br>Committee on Foreign Affairs<br>U.S. House of Representatives<br>Washington, DC 20515 |

Dear Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, Chairman Lawler, and Ranking Member Moskowitz:

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonpartisan, nonprofit press freedom organization, urges you, as the leaders of the Senate and House subcommittees with jurisdiction over U.S. policy toward Egypt, to raise Egypt's unprecedented deterioration in press freedom with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, who is reportedly visiting Washington, D.C., in the coming days.

Press freedom in Egypt, a key recipient of U.S. security assistance, is severely compromised, with 25 journalists currently imprisoned in the country, including six journalists from the investigative outlet Matsadaash, and the forced closure of Mada Masr, Egypt's leading independent media outlet. In less than two months, Egyptian authorities have launched an unprecedented attack on independent media in the country. The crackdown escalated in September when security forces arrested six journalists from Matsadaash, the outlet's entire Egypt-based newsroom. They remain in detention since then on baseless charges of terrorism and spreading false news. Their detention has been arbitrarily renewed three times.

We respectfully ask you to press Egypt to unconditionally release all journalists behind bars, starting by ending the legal intimidation of Mada Masr's editor-in-chief Lina Attalah. Egypt must also reform the legal framework the authorities use to criminalize independent media in Egypt.

On October 27, after a trial marked by serious due process violations, the New Cairo Misdemeanor Court convicted Attalah of running Mada Masr without a license. The court fined Attalah nearly $54,000 and ordered Mada Masr closed and its equipment confiscated. Security forces then held Attalah in custody until the fine was paid. Mada Masr had applied for a license twice, in 2018 and in 2020, but the authorities ignored or rejected its applications. The Mada Masr case illustrates how the licensing rules under Media Law No. 180 of 2018 can be used to target critical outlets that the authorities refuse to license. Attalah's appeal hearing is on November 25.

In a further irregularity, during her court appearance on October 27, Attalah also learned for the first time that she had been sentenced in absentia to a one-year imprisonment in a separate case for running an "unlicensed website and publishing false news."

Alarmingly, Egypt's crackdown on the press coincided with the Trump administration's decision to waive human rights conditions on the delivery of military aid for Egypt. Egyptian authorities appear to have interpreted the waiver as a green light to escalate their attack on the country's independent press.

Congressional action is all the more urgent because of the Trump administration's failure to factor in respect for press freedom and human rights as a key element of the bilateral relationship. While Egypt may have "proven to be good, reliable partners on a number of fronts" as Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently stated, that is certainly not the case when it comes to factual, independent reporting.

Congress, and your subcommittees in particular, can help reverse this downward trend by making unequivocally clear to Foreign Minister Abdelatty that the close U.S.-Egypt partnership and continued U.S. military aid depends on tangible progress on the following points:

- Releasing all detained journalists in Egypt, including the six detained Matsadaash journalists, unconditionally and dropping all charges against them.
- Reversing the order to shut down Mada Masr and ending all legal intimidation of its editor-in-chief, Lina Attalah.
- Granting licenses to all independent media outlets that seek them, including Mada Masr, and immediately unblocking all blocked news websites.
- Amending Article 6 of the Media Law No. 180 of 2018 to bring it in line with Egypt's constitution and international standards, such that media outlets can be established by notification rather than prior government authorization.