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Egypt: Journalist Adel Sabri charged and detained for reporting on human rights

On 5 April, Dokki Prosecution ordered the 15-day detention of journalist **Adel Sabri** pending an investigation on charges related to his online news platform, which reports on electoral irregularities and human rights issues.

[Adel Sabri](#) is a journalist and member of the Egyptian Press Syndicate. He is the editor-in-chief of **Masr Al-Arabia**, a privately owned news website founded in 2014. It publishes on issues related to human rights and democracy and disseminates information related to the work of Egyptian and international human rights NGOs. Since conventional independent media has been repressed, Egyptian activists, students, journalists and general readers have come to rely on [Masr Al-Arabia](#) for international news, critical reports, and op-eds on political and economic developments in Arabic.

On 3 April at 15:30, a group of security officers in plain clothes affiliated with the Department for the Investigation of Artistic Products and Intellectual Property Rights in the Ministry of Interior raided the premises of Masr Al-Arabia in Dokki District in the city of Giza. They searched offices, confiscated computers, removed journalists from the premises and sealed its doors with red wax. Adel Sabri was arrested and transferred to Dokki Police station.

On 5 April, the General Prosecution charged him with “publishing fake news”, “affiliation with a terrorist organisation with the purpose of undermining the political system”, “disseminating ideologies through text and images published in Masr Al-Arabia news website to change constitutional and fundamental principles of the state”, and “inciting protests to harm security and public order”. The General Prosecution ordered that he be detained for 15 days pending further investigation.

On 1 April, the Supreme Media Regulatory Council, following a complaint from the National Election Authority, fined Masr Al-Arabia LE50,000 (approximately 2,300 Euro) for publishing a translation of a New York Times’ article. The article had claimed that Egyptian authorities had used financial and material incentives to encourage citizens to vote during the Presidential elections to increase voter turnout.

Over the past year, Egyptian authorities have intensified their crackdown on online media and critical websites. Since May 2017, the government has blocked more than 497 websites, including Masr Al-Arabia. Most are either media outlets or websites of human rights NGOs.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned with the detention of, and charges against, journalist and human rights defender Adel Sabri, which it believes are due to his legitimate media activities in defending human rights and democracy. It believes that the legal action that has been taken against him is an act of retaliation against Masr Al-Arabia's news coverage of human rights issues and irregularities in recent Egyptian presidential elections.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Egypt to:

1. Drop all charges against Adel Sabri as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being detained and charged solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Adel Sabri and ensure his liberty and security and cease all forms of harassment against him and members of Masr al-Arabia news website.
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers in Egypt in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.