

URGENT ACTION

SIX UNJUSTLY DETAINED JOURNALISTS TORTURED

On 28 and 29 September 2026, Egyptian security forces arrested six journalists working for the independent fact-checking platform Matsadaash, namely: Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira, Abdallah Qadry, Islam Barakat, Omar Helal, Mohamed Mahmoud and Mohamed Adel. Following their arrests, they were forcibly disappeared for periods ranging between five and six days, held in undisclosed locations and denied contact with their families and lawyers. Amnesty International learned that during this period security officers subjected all six to torture and other ill-treatment to force them to record self-incriminating statements on video. At the time of writing, Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira was held in 10th of Ramadan prison, while the other five journalists were detained in Badr prison, pending investigations into terrorism-related and “false news” charges in connection with their media work. The authorities must immediately and unconditionally release them as they are solely detained for their media work and the exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Public Prosecutor Mohamed Shawky Ayyad

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Dear Counsellor,

*I am deeply concerned about the arbitrary detention and reported torture of six journalists working for Matsadaash: **Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira, Abdallah Qadry, Islam Barakat, Omar Helal, Mohamed Mahmoud and Mohamed Adel**. Following their arrests on 28 and 29 September 2026, the journalists were held for five to six days in undisclosed locations, while authorities concealed their whereabouts from their families and lawyers. On 4 October 2026, they were brought to the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) for interrogations. According to a member of the defence team, during questioning by the SSSP, the six journalists said that National Security Agency (NSA) agents subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment during their detention at NSA premises, including beatings, electric shocks and threats to harm their families. All six were blindfolded, and some were handcuffed with their hands behind their backs, during NSA interrogations. Officers forced them to read out prepared statements incriminating themselves while being filmed. NSA agents also threatened to subject them to further torture if they disclosed the abuse. Their lawyers asked prosecutors to investigate their enforced disappearance and torture, question the officers responsible for their arrest and detention, and refer the journalists to the Forensic Medicine Authority to document their injuries. After interrogating them, the SSSP ordered their detention for 15 days pending investigations. Their pretrial detention was extended by another 15 days on 14 October 2026.*

According to their lawyer, all six face accusations of joining a terrorist group identified as the Muslim Brotherhood, “financing terrorism”, using an online account to promote the ideas of a terrorist group, and publishing “false news” and information”. The charge of “financing terrorism” is punishable by the death penalty. Prosecutors questioned them about the platform’s staff, editorial decisions and verification methods, as well as their personal histories and political and religious views. During questioning, the journalists explained that their work involved checking information, including information obtained from official sources.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release all six journalists and drop all charges against them as they stem solely from the exercise of their right to freedom of expression and media work. Pending their release, ensure their protection from torture and other ill-treatment, including reprisals against them or their families for reporting abuse; grant them regular access to their families, access to their lawyers confidentially and any healthcare they need; and ensure that their detention conditions meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners. Finally, ensure a prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigation into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Matsadaash is an independent Egyptian platform that carries out fact-checking and investigative reporting. Its work includes scrutinizing official statements and reporting on matters of public interest. For instance, the platform fact-checked official claims about [refugee and migrant numbers in Egypt](#) and government [statements](#) on health and education spending. In 2023, one of its editors, Karim Asaad, was detained for about two days in connection with Matsadaash coverage of a private aircraft seized in Zambia following its arrival from Egypt. The six journalists arrested in September 2026 constituted the platform's entire editorial team working inside Egypt.

Security forces arrested the journalists in a series of raids beginning late on 28 September 2026 and continuing on 29 September 2026. Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira and Abdallah Qadry were arrested at their homes in Giza governorate, while Islam Barakat and Omar Helal were arrested from their homes in Gharbiya and Port Said governorates, respectively. Mohamed Mahmoud and Mohamed Adel were arrested on the streets of Cairo. During the home raids, security officers confiscated phones and computers, including devices belonging to relatives, without showing arrest warrants or informing families where they were taking the journalists. According to a member of the defence team, lawyers asked the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) to register the journalists' accounts of torture and coerced recorded statements as formal complaints and investigate the circumstances of their arrests and enforced disappearance. They also requested that prosecutors refer the journalists to the Forensic Medicine Authority to document their injuries, and bring those responsible for torture to trial. Prosecutors did not respond, while on 7 October 2026, the Public Prosecution issued a statement alleging that Matsadaash operated as a media committee affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, citing as evidence a "confession" by one journalist, bank transfers and electronic communications. It also stated that no visible injuries were found on the six journalists and that forensic examinations carried out on three of the individuals found no injuries or signs of violence. In [response](#), the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), whose lawyers represent the journalists, said the prosecution had presented lawful employment arrangements and routine editorial communications as evidence of criminal activity.

At the time of writing, five of the journalists were held in Badr 1 prison, while Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira was detained in 10th of Ramadan 4 prison. Amnesty International has documented cruel and inhuman detention conditions in Egyptian prisons including inadequate access to healthcare, insufficient food and potable water, excessive heat during summers, restrictions on family visits and limited opportunities to exercise outside their cells. In Badr prison, Amnesty International has also documented constant camera surveillance and fluorescent lighting, humiliating body searches, and restrictions on reading materials and correspondence. In June 2024, dozens of Badr 1 prisoners began a hunger strike to protest detention conditions. Authorities responded with punitive measures, including transfers to distant prisons and deliberate cuts to electricity and water. Since authorities announced on 30 September 2026 delaying implementation of the new Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP) by a year, prisoners across Egypt including in Badr 1 have engaged in protests and strikes after their hopes of release under the shorter pretrial detention limits in the new CCP were crushed.

The arrests take place against a protracted crackdown on independent media in Egypt. Since 2016, the authorities have further tightened their control over the media and subjected dozens of journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecution on unfounded terrorism-related charges, and dismissal for expressing critical views. Security forces have raided independent online media outlets, while authorities have blocked hundreds of websites. Media and cybercrime legislation adopted in 2018 further expanded the authorities' powers to control media content, restrict media work and impose prison sentences for online expression. Among those arbitrarily detained is journalist Tawfik Ghanem, arrested in May 2021 in connection with his previous media work and held in Badr 1 Prison, where he has been denied adequate healthcare. After nearly five years in detention, he was referred to trial in 2026. The arrests of the six Matsadaash journalists sparked solidarity protests, including a sit-in at the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate on 3 October 2026 demanding their release. Two days later, on 5 October 2026, journalist Rasha Azab, who took part in the sit-in, was interrogated over a social media post criticizing the interior ministry, accused of promoting terrorist acts and released on bail of EGP 10,000.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 16 April 2027

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mohamed Ashraf Abu Emeira, Abdallah Qadry, Islam Barakat, Omar Helal, Mohamed Mahmoud and Mohamed Adel (They/ Them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: First UA