“Forces of Evil”

How the authorities targeted journalists during the presidential elections
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Summary

- Egyptian police forcibly disappeared four young journalists before presenting them to State Security Prosecution; the latter detained them pending investigation.
- The rate of imprisonment of journalists in publishing cases increased during the period accompanying the presidential elections.
- In two cases, the Public Prosecution ordered the imprisonment of journalists as a result of their participation in the production of documentary films on the political situation in Egypt.
- The lack of registration in the union is still a sword over the necks of young journalists and a ready charge to fabricate accusations against them; monitored in at least two cases.
- If imprisonment is the punishment of practicing the profession of journalism for Egyptians, deportation is the punishment of foreign journalists; the case of “Bel Trew” British Times correspondent.

Introduction

The presidential election in Egypt coincided with extensive campaigns against press freedom and journalists. The Ministry of the Interior, the Journalists’ Syndicate, the Higher Media Council, the National Press Agency, the Public Information Authority and the Public Prosecution participated in these campaigns. The latter has recently entered the line of violation of press freedom in a new manner. The Public prosecutor issued a statement in which he said that public prosecutors and public attorneys will monitor printed, audio and video media and take legal action against those commit breaches, or in other words, “the forces of evil”, quoting the statement.

This paper attempts to monitor the general atmosphere in which the press community worked during the period of the Egyptian presidential elections. The researcher worked to monitor the many indicators for violations against journalists working in Egypt.
Documentary films anger the president and cause their makers to disappear

On the morning of February 4, 2018 - at 11 am - contact with trainee journalists Hassan al-Banna Mubarak and Mustapha al-Aasar was interrupted. Their lawyers later learned that they had been arrested by a security campaign of the National Security, when they were traveling in a “microbus” from their residence in Faisal district of Giza governorate to Hassan’s work place in Dokki district.

Al-Aasar works as a trainee journalist at the Ultra Voice website, while Hassan works as an intern at the desk in Al-Shorouk newspaper. The two journalists remained under enforced disappearance for 13 days. During that period, Hassan’s family sent several telegrams to the Attorney General, the Attorney General of the Giza Prosecution, the National Council for Human Rights, the Minister of the Interior, the Ministry of Interior Inspection Department and the Director of Giza Security to inform them of the disappearance. The family considered him forefully disappeared. Al Aasar family continued to search for him in hospitals and police departments.

Their lawyers filed a complaint with the Attorney-General of the Giza Prosecution for the disappearance of the journalists on Monday. Then a lawyer found Mustafa al-Aasar during his presentation to the Supreme State Security Prosecution on Saturday, February 17, 2018. He learned that Hassan and al-Aasar had been interrogated on Thursday (February 15th) and the prosecution decided to detain them for 15 days in case No. 441 of 2018 after charging them of joining a group established against the law and publishing false news.

AFTE learned that the arrest of journalist Hassan al-Banna Mubarak was a coincidence in view of his presence with his flat mate, who was followed by the police for participation in filming with a number of public and political figures in Egypt, especially those whose positions changed from supporting President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to opposing him. This film was being prepared for marketing purposes in one of the channels that have strained relations with the Egyptian authorities.

On the morning of February 18, 2018, a police force raided the house of photographer Ahmed Tarek, in the Nahia district of Giza Governorate. His mother says,

"A number of individuals entered Ahmed’s room and closed the door, and interrogated him for more than half an hour".

His mother did not hear anything from the conversation between them throughout this period. After the interrogation, which they described as “chat,” the laptop and personal phone of Ahmed Tariq were seized and security forces asked Ahmad to change his clothes and leave with them.

On the afternoon of the arrest of Tariq, his lawyer went to ask about him in the Kerdasa police station, as one of the officers had told Tareq’s mother while he was being taken
to a place unknown to her. However, the police station of Kerdasa denied his presence and denied his arrest. His family filed a complaint of his disappearance by the police to the public prosecution and relevant bodies. However, one of the lawyers found Ahmed Tarek on the fourth day of his disappearance, Saturday, February 21, 2018, at the State Security Prosecution, where his lawyer learned that he had been interrogated and that Saturday’s session was to complete the investigation into high state security case No. 467, after being accused of joining a group founded contrary to the law and publishing false news. The prosecution decided to detain him for 15 days pending investigations. The real circumstances of the arrest of Ahmed began on Friday morning, March 2, 2018, when Al-Masry Al-Youm published a news story on its website titled “A Film, a Drama and a Poetry Chamber ... Behind the President's Wrath,” in which it said that the Supreme State Security Prosecution on March 1, 2018, received national security investigations of regarding the makers of the documentary film «minus 1095», where it accused the filmmakers of «intentionally spreading false news to incite against the state, through the transmission of images and videos and statements taken out of context, and belonging to opposition political movements, receiving assignments from hostile media outlets, a prelude to broadcast through channels that are hostile to the state and in support of the Brotherhood.» The prosecution ordered the arrest of Salma Alaeddin, the director, and a photographer, and decided to detain film editor Tareq Ziadeh for 15 days for producing the film, which showed a number of public figures who made statements, described by investigations to be “offensive against the state”. Those figures included Azza Suleiman, Abdul Khaliq Farouk, Ghazali Harb, Hamdi Qeshta, Mazin Hassan, Ilham Eidaros, Masoum Marzouq, Mamdouh Hamza, Amr Badr, Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Anwar Sadat.

Motaz Wadna and the arrest for publishing

In a recent “Fact Sheet” on the file of imprisoned journalists, AFTE noted that one of the most recent forms of arrest and harassment of journalists on the basis of their work is the direct and multiple targeting of journalists, including the targeting of journalists that work in media outlets which the state considers are seeking to harm Security and stability, and spread lies and rumors about the Egyptian state. A number of journalists and media people are behind bars today on the case of “Mekamelin 2”, which includes a large number of these journalists, on whom AFTE plans to issue a separate report. That is in addition to other cases, including the case of journalist Mahmoud Husein, who is held pending investigation in case 11152/2016 for working as a news producer in the Qatari based Al Jazeera channel.

The arrest of journalist Mu'taz and Danan is an important sign of this kind of targeting of journalists as well as the decline of press freedom in Egypt during the current period. On Friday evening, February 16, 2018, a security force arrested Mu'taz Muhammad Shams al-Din, aka. Mo'taz Wednan, and a number of rehis latives while they were in one of their cars, before leaving his relatives to an unknown location, most probably a national security headquarters. This followed the publication by Arabic “Huffington Post” a dialogue recorded with the Judge Hisham Genina, that was filmed at his home, concerning the arrest of the team of Sami Anan, the former chief of staff of the Egyptian army, and the candidate excluded from the presidential elections 2018. In that interview
Genina said things considered by the state to be a violation of the law, upon which the ministry of the interior arrested Hisham Genina and handed him over to the Public Prosecution for interrogation.

Wednan appeared in the Supreme State Security Prosecution on Saturday (February 21st) and was charged with joining a banned group and publishing false news. The Supreme State Security Prosecution decided to detain him for 15 days pending investigations into case No. 441 of 2018, high state security.

The case of Wednan witnessed a further shift in the level of violations against journalists. The fact that the detention of “Wednan” is one of the few facts in which a decision of imprisonment is issued exclusively because of publishing, in violation of the constitution, which explicitly prohibited imprisonment in press cases (article 71) except in three cases (incitement to violence, discrimination between citizens, defaming individuals’ honor), none of which was committed by Mo’taz.

Another aspect of the Wednan case is the threat he received from the family of Judge Hisham Geneina, where he was contacted and threatened by the Judge’s family according to a statement published by Wednan’s family, where it denied allegations by Mr. Hossam Lotfi, the judge’s lawyer that Wednan had clandestinely recorded the session, and has edited and taken it out of context, resulting in the later arrest of Wednan. Wedana replied to those accusations during the interrogations and presented a 90 min recording of the meeting with the judge, that proves his and his family's knowledge of the interview, and that it was filmed by a professional camera and not by his mobile phone as claimed by the Geneina’s lawyers in their statement. This case demonstrates the danger of journalists being scapegoated for being the weaker link in those equations and their easy abuse in view of the absence of any role of the councils and bodies whose role is to defend these journalists such as the Journalists Syndicate and the Supreme Council for Media.

Public prosecution constrains press freedom

It should also be noted that the method of arrest of Hassan and Al-Asar and Wadnan indicates that they were being followed and they were arrested from various means of transport, which, raises suspicions regarding the level of surveillance people working in the press in Egypt are subjected to these days and the nature of the bodies that do so and this conduct’s compatibility with the Constitution, law and international standards for press freedom.

This is clearly explained by the Egyptian Attorney General’s statement, which was published by several media outlets on February 28, 2018, in which he issued a stern warning of what he called “the forces of evil” - the term used by the President more than once in more than one speech to refer to forces that he considers hostile to the state. The statement warns of seeking to undermine the security and stability of the country through the dissemination and spread of lies and false news through various media and social networking sites. The Attorney-General authorized “public attorneys and heads of public prosecution, within their respective spheres of competence, to continue to
monitor such outlets and sites and to control what is broadcasted from them, deliberately releasing news, statements or false rumors that may disturb public security. He ordered them to undertake the necessary criminal procedures against those outlets based on their professional commitment and nationalist role to notify the Public Prosecution of everything that represents a departure from the press and media charter.”

The statement of the Attorney General did not specify the nature of the lies and false news intended, and most of the terms used by the statement were ambiguous and vague terms, which could imply the personal and political taste and preference in their interpretation, belonging more to the political rather than a legal rhetoric. However, the most dangerous aspect of the statement is that it carries a wide-ranging threat to all media outlets, printed, audio, visual and digital, concerning all they publish, broadcast or produced, whether news or statements, a matter which will lead to an increase of internal censorship in the various media outlets for fear of falling within the loose web of breaches mentioned by the Public prosecutor.

The Public Prosecutor also instructed the Attorney Generals and the Chief Prosecutors to continue following up on these outlets, which indicates the fact that the Public Prosecution was monitoring what was broadcasted, published or issued by the various media during the past periods, and therefore ordered the Attorney General to continue to monitor them. This matter leads to a questioning of the legality of these process of surveillance by the prosecution of media outlets, and whether it is the prosecution that is managing the surveillance through special committees? And whether it produces periodic report son that matter? Does the prosecution have the necessary technology to so this, or is it seeking the help of security and sovereign bodies to undertake the surveillance?!! All these questions are triggered by the statement by the public prosecutor. Yet, AFTE has no access to a confident answer.

In any case, if we recognize the fact that the statement was approved, the Public Prosecutor’s Office becomes a new member of the group of authorities responsible for surveillance and monitoring of the media, which jeopardizes the nature of its role as a neutral investigative body. In addition, the Attorney-General issued a directive instructing the authorities responsible for the media to notify the Public Prosecution of everything that constitutes a departure from the press and media charter. This confirms that the surveillance function of the Public Prosecution is separate from the supervisory role of those responsible for the media, namely, the Higher Media Council, the National Press and Information Commissions, the Press Syndicate and the Media Syndicate.

In fact, the Supreme Media Council as well as the media union, since their establishment, seek to monitor and follow up everything that is broadcasted on the small screen. In each of them there are monitoring, and follow up committees that produce periodic reports, to the point that the High Media Council has monitoring committees for sports and drama channels. However, the nature of dealing with press and media violations by any of them was through the signing of sanctions provided for by the internal sanctions regulations of the Supreme Council, provided that the Council is competent to punish the tool and refer the journalist or media person to his union to investigate and punish him. But after the directive of the Public Prosecution it appears that these bodies will refer the violations to the prosecution to take criminal proceedings against them. Here, we cannot predict, whether a discrimination will be made between breaches that deserve
administrative penalties to be undertaken by the councils or whether all breaches will be subjected to criminal procedures.

One day after the statement of the Attorney-General, specifically on March 1, 2018, during a speech by President Sisi at the opening of the new city of El Alamein, he addressed the media, "The army and the police represent the Egyptian people, and every day they fall martyrs and wounded. It is not acceptable to abuse them." He added "The abuse of the army and the police is an insult to all Egyptians. Therefore, this is no longer a freedom of opinion matter. To me it is equal to high treason" He called on the various media outlets to address these abuses.

Immediately after the president's speech, the Ministry of the Interior filed a complaint, no 1170 for the year 2018 misdemeanors in central Cairo, in which it accused media journalist Khairi Ramadan of broadcasting false news that would harm the police and its employees, in the context of Ramadan's criticism, in one of the episodes of his program “Egypt Today” on Channel 1 of Egyptian television, of the economic conditions of police officers, quoting the words of one of the wives of the officers - not mentioned – complaining about living conditions. The prosecution summoned Ramadan on Thursday the 1st of March 2018. He was interrogated on the 3rd of March and held in detention for 4 days pending investigation, before being released by the North Cairo criminal court on the 5th of March with 10 thousand pound bail.

The “Ramadan” incident is a continuation of the approach of imprisoning journalists in violation of the Constitution, as confirmed by the head of journalists union “Abdel Mohsen Salama” in a television interview on the “CBC” satellite channel, where he pointed out that there are 35 articles in a number of laws that allow the imprisonment of journalists in cases of “Publishing” in violation of the Constitution, and that these articles must be amended because they are unconstitutional.

Also, the imprisonment of media journalist Khairi Ramadan indicates the level of danger to media and journalists in the course of their work in Egypt, from which they are not protected even if they are close to the political authority or if they are working in a state-owned media outlet, as was the case with Ramadan. The case of Ramadan was also the first implementing the directives of the public prosecutor and the president.
Non registration at the union..Imminent threat for young journalists

Another incident that immediately preceded that of Ramadan was the arrest of trainee journalist May Said Mohamed Elsabbagh, working in “Rasif 22” who was arrested on 18 February 2018, together with photographer Ahmed Mostafa, while making a feature on the Alexandria tramway. She was arrested and taken to Al Attarin police station in Alexandria.

On Thursday, March 1, 2018, the Attorney General of the Al-Attarin Court decided to interrogate them and decided to keep them until the following day until the SSI investigations were received. The next day, they were sentenced to 15 days' detention after being charged with joining a group established contrary to the provisions of the law, aiming to obstruct the law and the constitution and obstructing the work of state institutions, using terrorism as their means. They were also accused of possession of audio visual material with the aim of broadcasting false news that may disrupt security, and public peace and destroy the basic foundations of the state and harm the country’s interest, receiving money from abroad via transfers in exchange for the previously mentioned crimes, practicing journalism without a license from the administrative body concerned, and filming and recording an audio visual file without prior permit from the ministry of culture. On the 15th of March 2018 the East Alexandria prosecution decided to release May with a 2000 LE bail and Ahmed Mostafa with a 1000 LE bail pending investigations.

The arrest of Mai al-Sabbagh reveals a new type of cases that have resulted in further violations against journalists without any step towards their protection. The arrest of Mai indicates that all journalists regardless of the nature of their press work are at risk. Their safety and freedom are threatened all the time, and that threat is not only limited to those covering sensitive issues such as politics and parties.

The Public Prosecutor’s Office accused May Sabbagh and Ahmed Mustafa of practicing journalism without obtaining a permit from the competent administrative authority, which has been mentioned by AFTE in many of its publications. The conditions of registration are arbitrary and unconstitutional, preventing many journalists from joining their union and gaining some protection and legitimacy in the exercise of their work. For a journalist to be registered with the union, he or she must be nominated by a newspaper recognized by the union. The law of the union requires that any journalist be kept for two years “under training” in order to be able to register in the union ledger. And thus the main body of young journalists does not enjoy the protection of the union. Despite the fact that May is a trained journalist, and despite the fact that the syndicate recognizes that there are thousands of trainees who are practicing journalists who are not members of the syndicate and the journalists union has asked the Egyptian authorities more than once to provide a safe environment for them to work, still the imprisonment of journalists persists. The imprisonment of May is a warning to all those journalists who are not members of the union who are liable to be imprisoned at any moment.

This is also evident in the ruling against journalist Hossam Mahfouz fining him 300
pounds for practicing journalism without a license, on the 7th of March 2018, which Mahfouz confirmed in a testimony on his personal Facebook page. A letter from the Syndicate of Journalists confirms that he is a practicing journalist and has applied for membership and holds training courses at the Syndicate of Journalists, which is the only administrative authority that has the right to charge him if he was impersonating a journalist.

"Hossam says, I presented the Court with the ID of the newspaper I am working with and another issued by a judicial body that I am a judicial reporter and an official letter that I am a depute of a supervisory body and registered there. The union law requires that journalists attend a period of training before applying for registration, which the prosecution accuses us of impersonating journalists. In my reply to the prosecutor I said I am not impersonating a journalist and the union law requires a training period. His reply was, OK don’t worry and then he wrote: there is a contradiction between the union law and the criminal law.

The incident of Khairi Ramadan and journalist Mai Sabbagh will not be the last in the reactions left by the statement of the Attorney General and the speech of the President. It is expected that similar incidents of violations against journalists will be witnessed during the coming period, especially after the public prosecutor published a new statement on Monday (March 12th), saying that “in the implementation of the decision of the Attorney General on the control of what is published and broadcasted in the various media outlets .. The Public Prosecution allocated mobile numbers to receive reports onWhats app and sms, provided the report include the name of the reporter and his personal coordinates. The numbers of these phones were distributed throughout the country, which prompted six members of the Journalists Syndicate Council to issue a statement expressing their rejection of “all attempts to block the press and journalists” and demanded “to rectify these conditions immediately and abide by the constitution that prohibits imprisonment in publishing cases.” They reiterated that “the free press is one of the tools and means of progress of society and the fight against terrorism as well”.

However, the position of the head of the Journalists’ Syndicate, Abdul Mohsen Salameh, seems different. Although he admits that there are many articles in the various laws that permit to imprison journalists in publishing cases in violation of the Constitution and that they should be amended, and despite his recent statement that there are thousands of trainee journalists who have not yet received a working membership of the union, and although he personally followed the case of arrest of Khairy Ramdan with all its details, still on two various occasions he said otherwise!

On March 2, during his speech at the symposium organized by the Alexandria Branch Syndicate, Salameh said: “The Syndicate of Journalists has never been in confrontation with state institutions; it is one of its main arms. Journalists have played a pivotal role in confronting the scenarios that were designed to slide the country into chaos”. He pointed out that “the president believes in the importance of journalists and their pivotal role, stressing that without the support of the leadership, he would not have been able to achieve the achievements, noting that a new law of the press is currently in parliament and will be submitted in the coming sessions.” The Journalists’ Syndicate and the Chairman of the Al-Ahram Foundation confirmed that no journalist is imprisoned in publishing cases, but in other cases, and still the syndicate did not abandon them.
Salameh referred to the same thing during his hosting on the CBC satellite with Lamis Al Hadidi, in her program “Here is Cairo”, which indicates the nature of the weak role of the head of the union in supporting journalists imprisoned for the performance of their work. According to AFTE’s recent estimates it has reached... Journalists.

The state does not stop persecuting journalists

In the same context, the vicious attack led by Egyptian authorities and their various instruments against press and media freedom and workers in both fields, continues. On Wednesday, March 7, 2018, the Giza Criminal Court, which was presided over by Judge Jamal Abdellah, held a hearing in support of the prison sentence of journalist Ahmed Al-Khatib, former head of the political section of Al Watan newspaper, for 4 years and a fine of 20 thousand pounds. Al-Khatib had appealed the verdict issued in absentia last September against him for four years, where he was accused of insulting the Al-Azhar. However, the court rejected the appeal and supported its previous ruling. The Attorney-General of the Northern District of Giza had referred the journalist of Al-Watan newspaper Ahmad Al-Khatib to the Criminal Court after he was accused of insulting Al-Azhar and spreading false news and rumors about it and its scholars.

- On the same day, the Attorney-General received a communication from lawyer Mohamed Hamed Salem, in which he accused Dr. Mohammed Al-Baz, the chairman of Al-Dustour newspaper, of insulting the divine, by publishing in the newspaper a topic entitled “How Muhammad Bin Salman recovered Allah from the hands of extremists.” The complaint, which carried the number 2904 for the year 2018, said that this headline was considered by some to be an insult to the divine, and that it was inconceivable that he would leave this matter without recourse to the specialists. He asked Hamid to take legal action to investigate the defendant and whether or not he wrote in good faith, through the formation of a committee of senior Al-Azhar scholars, the Arabic Language Academy and the Islamic Research Academy, the professors of Islamic philosophy and history, and to write a report about the headline and the article to determine whether or not it constituted an insult to the divine, and to undertake the legally necessary measures in light of the report of this Committee.

- The Coraabia sports website issued a statement on 15 March 2018, where they announced that they will indefinitely stop working on the site or until matters are dealt with profoundly. This follows a block by an anonymous body of the site for the second time without expressing any reasons and without knowing who issued the decision and whom to talk to address the matter. In their statement they indicated “we have assumed hundreds of thousands of losses in investments every month, and we were confident that the body which took the decision to block us would send us a message, but today, after the blocking of the new site for the second time without warning and without any right, we have decided not to fight again against an unknown entity that exploits its power and authority without seeking the truth”.

- On the evening of Monday, March 19, 2018, the same “anonymous” entity blocked the site of “Fi Alfann” [In Arts], a technical site owned by “Sarmady” after
publishing an article about the attack by a Saudi businessman and head of the public sports administration, Torky Aal Sheikh, on Egyptian artist Amal Maher. Later the block was lifted.

- On March 16, 2018, Abdelmohsen Salama, the head of the journalists’ union and chairman of the board of directors of Al-Ahram, decided to refer an article published on “Al-Masry Al-Youm” newspaper titled “Saudi princesses put the palace in trouble” to the union council in preparation for referring the matter to the investigation and disciplinary committees of the union, upon the decision of the Supreme Media Council to refer colleague Tariq Amin, editor of the site “for interrogation before the Journalists Syndicate and to wait for the results of the investigation”.

- On March 16, 2018, authorities in Egypt confiscated an issue of the monthly Al Hilal magazine issued by the government owned Dar El Hilal because of a picture of President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi’s mother, which was published in the file and found to be incorrect, despite the fact that the whole issue praises El Sisi and has his picture on its cover. The latest issue, which was confiscated from Al-Hilal magazine, was issued in March. It is a commemorative number titled “The President”. It contains many related topics, including the health and psychological state of Egypt’s presidents, the authority and the intellectuals between dialogue and conflict, in addition to stories and secrets of private lives of presidents.

Not only Egyptians, Foreign journalists also in the line of fire

On February 21, 2018, the Egyptian authorities deported the British journalist Bel Trew, the correspondent of the English newspaper The Times, without giving any reasons or going to trial.

Trew, 33 years, was arrested on February, 20 while working on a report in the Shubra district after interviewing a relative of a man who died on board of an immigration boat bound for Europe. She was taken to a police station and hours later sent to Cairo International Airport and from there to London. Ahmed Othman, AFTE lawyer, added that Egyptian journalist Mohammed Ezz Al Arab was arrested with “Trew” on the same day and was released on February 22.

“I love Egypt but I cannot go back to it and no one knows why,” Trew said in an article in The Times on Monday (March 26th). She said that a microbus carrying five plainclothes security men stopped her immediately after she finished her interview and took her to the police station, where she was interrogated for 7 hours, and threatened to undergo a military trial, according to the correspondent. The Times did not announce the deportation, which took place on 21 February last, in the hope that there is a misunderstanding that can be resolved. But the newspaper was told by diplomats that it had become “nongrata” to the Egyptian side and would not be allowed to return to the country. The newspaper tried to get a comment from the Egyptian Embassy in London, as well as the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, or the media center, but none of these agencies gave any statements about the «deportation Bell.»
In her article, Bell confirmed that she was preparing a report on the boat and revealed that one of the café’s leaders who conducted the dialogue told the security that she was investigating another boat that questioned the involvement of the Egyptian authorities in dumping it near Rasheed coast in 2016. Accusations escalated to amount to the Interior Ministry’s claim that Bell had been searching for the forcibly disappeared. However, she had provided a recording of the interview to the investigators as evidence of the untrue claim. She assured them that her dialogue with the man was about one of his relatives on board an immigration boat and did not contain words such as “government, state, army, elections,” according to the article.

Bell pointed out that the authorities did not allow the presence of a lawyer or a representative of the British Embassy while being questioned. She later learned through a British diplomatic envoy he had met at Cairo airport before her deportation that the embassy had sent one of its envoys to the police station. Officials there told him that the reporter had been removed from, although she was still inside, she said.

For its part, the Times said in a statement «Since then, we seek to ensure the safety of her return to Cairo in time to cover the presidential election. But it is now clear that the authorities do not intend to allow her to return. “ A spokeswoman for the British embassy in Cairo said the reasons for keeping Trew out of the country were still unclear. “We provided support and expressed our concerns at the highest level, and the British Foreign Secretary conveyed these concerns to his Egyptian counterpart. The Egyptian authorities did not provide any evidence of (Trew) committing a wrong act and we seek to communicate with them on this case.»

However, SIS issued a detailed statement on Sunday, March 25, 2018, to respond to the allegations of Trew and the British Times newspaper that the correspondent violated the laws and rules of accreditation and the work of foreign correspondents in Egypt, as she did not issue the temporary work permit from The State Information Service (SIS), which the state obliges her to carry during her journalistic practice, until the issuance of the 2018 permit. It is reported that by the beginning of this year, SIS began requiring foreign correspondents to obtain work permits renewed every month, due to the late issuance of permanent permits for 2018.

According to the Times spokesman, the reporter applied for a permit, and was informed of the approval, but the agency told «Bel» that this permit is not ready for publication, and that her status as correspondent in Egypt was sound. This confirmation came two days before the reporter was arrested.

The Commission also said that Bell Trew filmed meetings on the street using video and photography without obtaining from the press center the necessary permits from the concerned authorities. This was denied by Trew and the newspaper “Times” since she confirmed that she did not have any equipment or cameras.

The statement added that in response to the concerns of “Trew” and “The Times” of the return of Trew to cover the presidential elections in Egypt “- that the British journalist had applied during her presence in Egypt, for a request to the Press Center on January 11, 2018 for a permit to cover the presidential elections, The National Elections Commission (NEA) granted this statement on March 22, 2018, one month after she had left Egypt,
and was handed over to the foreign correspondents’ press center. Trew was notified of the issuance of the permit by the Egyptian Information Office at the Egyptian Embassy in London, where she resides. This procedure indicates that lack of truth of what she published in her article and which several foreign media outlets quoted. Because the request for permission to cover the presidential elections was in accordance with Egyptian law and the rules of the National Elections Commission, it was issued for her, and was not affected by her earlier position which is doubly in violation with Egyptian law and the rules of accreditation and work of foreign correspondents in Egypt, who were expelled from the country because of it.

The detention and arrest of “Trew”, which she narrated in her article, indicates the level of xenophobia in Egypt since the events of June 30, 2013. Foreign journalists working in Egypt were most exposed to violations against the background of this culture fed by Egyptian authorities of instilling fear among Egyptians of dealing with foreigners, especially journalists.

It is also worth noting the increasing role of the State Information Service in monitoring what is published through foreign media outlets and institutions in Egypt, especially since journalist Diaa Rashwan assumed the task of chair in June 2017. The Commission is working on producing a monthly report on everything published in the foreign press about Egypt, which led to many crises with the largest international press organizations against the backdrop of coverage of more than one event in Egypt, most notably the Oasis incident in October 2017, the BBC report on enforced disappearance (Zubaydah case) and Reuters news about the state mobilization of citizens for the last Presidential elections.