Joint Statement: The Blocking of Zawia 3 is a Serious Escalation in Egypt's Restrictions on Press Freedom

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The undersigned human rights organizations and media outlets express our deep concern about the Egyptian authorities' decision to block Zawia 3, an independent media platform known for its critical reporting and commitment to journalistic integrity. This action is part of a broader pattern of restrictions on press freedom and digital rights in Egypt, where independent media outlets, journalists, and human rights defenders face increasing censorship, legal threats, and intimidation.

Zawia 3 has provided an essential platform for in-depth reporting on political, social, environmental, and human rights issues, offering perspectives often absent from mainstream media. The decision to block it reflects a broader strategy to limit access to independent news and information, depriving the Egyptian public of their right to a free and diverse press. Over 500 news and human rights websites have been blocked in recent years, alongside ongoing efforts to control and restrict independent journalism through legal and administrative measures.

Press freedom is a cornerstone of any democratic society and is protected under Egypt's Constitution as well as international human rights treaties to which Egypt is a party, including Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Blocking independent media violates these commitments and undermines journalists' ability to work freely and citizens' capacity to stay informed.

The use of technical censorship methods, such as Reset Attacks, to obstruct access to news websites is a concerning development that further restricts public access to independent reporting and online spaces for dialogue. These measures contribute to a climate of self-censorship, fear, and restricted civic engagement, ultimately weakening public discourse and transparency.

We call on the Egyptian government to take immediate steps to uphold press freedom and digital rights, including:

- Lifting the blocking of Zawia 3 and ensuring that independent media outlets can operate freely without interference or restrictions.
- Guaranteeing access to information and freedom of expression, in line with Egypt's constitutional and international human rights obligations.
- Ending all forms of digital censorship and legal harassment targeting journalists, media workers, and human rights defenders.
- Ensuring a safe and open media environment where journalists can report without fear of

retaliation or reprisal.

At a time when access to reliable and independent information is more crucial than ever, restrictions on press freedom only serve to isolate voices, limit dialogue, and prevent open discussion on key issues affecting society. Ensuring a free and open media environment is a legal obligation and a fundamental necessity for an informed and engaged public.

Signatories:

- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- ANKH
- Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)
- McGill University
- Daraj Media
- REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression
- CIVICUS Global Alliance
- Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria (HRJN)
- Skyline International for Human Rights
- Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)
- Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)
- El Nadeem Center
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- Salam for Democracy and Human Rights
- Rights Realization Centre
- Adaleh Center for Human Rights – Morocco
- EgyptWide for Human Rights
- Innovation for Change – MENA Hub
- Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE)
- Opposition International
- Raseef22
- Access Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)
- Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
- Campaign Against Arms Trade
- Gohoud to Support Human Rights Defenders
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

- EuroMed Rights
- MENA Rights Group
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)
- Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms

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