Organizations condemn Mada Masr shutdown, stand with editor-in-chief Lina Attalah

Statements & Letters · Joint Statements · Statements · Egypt · 28 October 2026

We, the undersigned organizations, condemn in the strongest terms the conviction of Lina Attalah, editor-in-chief of the independent Egyptian news outlet Mada Masr, and the court's order to shut down one of the country's leading and last remaining independent newsrooms. This is the latest episode in a new and escalating crackdown on Egypt's independent media. We call on the Egyptian authorities to allow Mada Masr to operate freely.

This unprecedented attack on independent media began in late September with the arrest of six journalists from the investigative and fact-checking platform Matsadaash, some of whom told prosecutors they were tortured and forced to record fabricated "confessions." The campaign has since widened: Journalist Rasha Azab was summoned for questioning, and the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate has been targeted by a coordinated defamation campaign.

In the latest incident, the New Cairo Misdemeanor Court convicted Attalah of managing an unlicensed website and imposed the maximum penalty: a fine of 3 million Egyptian pounds (about US$54,000), the closure of Mada Masr's website and the confiscation of its devices and equipment. Attalah was taken into custody inside the courthouse immediately after the ruling and released after 7 hours.

During the release procedures, Attalah was surprised to discover an in absentia conviction issued against her in 2024—sentencing her to one year in prison on charges of disseminating false news and operating a website without a license. Her defense team has filed an objection to the in absentia judgment, and a hearing has been scheduled for November 11 to review the case.

Attalah's trial was marked by serious violations of her right to a fair trial. According to reports from the hearing, journalists were excluded from the courtroom during critical stages of the proceedings, and the defense was prevented from being granted adequate time to review the case file and from presenting key procedural requests, including requests to submit documents and hear witnesses.

The reports also describe how the court appointed a lawyer for Lina despite her objections and the presence of her eight-member legal team, and proceeded to announce its verdict regardless.

Mada Masr's legal team plans to appeal the ruling and pursue all available legal avenues to overturn it.

Attalah was interrogated and referred to trial shortly after Mada Masr joined other Egyptian and regional outlets in standing up a solidarity flash newsroom to fill the gap in coverage following the

arrest of the six Matsadaash journalists.

The expanding arrest, closure and defamation campaign against independent media sends a clear message of fear and intimidation to newsrooms across the country.

We call on the Egyptian authorities to:

- Grant licenses to independent outlets without discrimination and allow them to operate freely, and end the use of licensing provisions under the media law to criminalize journalism.
- End the campaign of intimidation against journalists, independent media and the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate.
- Release the 25 journalists currently held in Egyptian custody immediately and unconditionally.

Signatories:

1. 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media
2. Access Now
3. Al Manassa
4. Al Qatiba
5. Alhudood
6. American Committee for Middle East Rights (ACMER)
7. Amnesty International
8. Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies (AITAS)
9. Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association (AMEJA)
10. Arab foundation for civil society and human rights
11. Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ)
12. ARTICLE 19
13. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).
14. Assafir Al-Arabi
15. Athr
16. AVAAZ
17. AWID
18. Babelmed
19. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, BIRN
20. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
21. Cartoonists Rights
22. Cedar Centre for Legal Studies

23. Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)
24. Center for International Policy (CIP) Washington
25. Center for Media Research – Nepal
26. Centre for Law and Democracy
27. Committee for Justice (CFJ)
28. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
29. Daraj Media
30. Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)
31. Digital Action
32. Digital Rights Foundation
33. Drop Site News
34. DW Akademie
35. Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
36. Egyptian Front for Human Rights
37. Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
38. EgyptWide for Human Rights
39. En toutes lettres
40. English PEN
41. EuroMed Rights Network
42. FactcheckAr
43. Factjaja
44. FactWatch, Bangladesh
45. FairSquare
46. Febrayer Network
47. Fondation Hirondelle
48. Free Press Unlimited (FPU)
49. Gherbal Initiative
50. Global Center for Journalism and Trauma
51. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
52. Global Voices
53. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
54. Hounna Feminist Platform
55. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement

56. Human Rights Watch
57. Huquqyat
58. Informed
59. Inkyfada
60. International Fact-Checking Network
61. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
62. International Federation of Journalists (FIJ)
63. International Journalism Festival
64. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
65. International Press Institute (IPI)
66. Internews Kosova KALLXO
67. Intersection Association For Rights and Freedoms (IARF)
68. Jadaliyya
69. Journalisme & Citoyenneté / Sahafa Med
70. Jummar
71. Khateera
72. Khatt 30
73. Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)
74. Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)
75. Lokman Slim Foundation
76. Maghreb Emergent
77. MARE. Collectif
78. Media Diversity Institute – Jabal Amel Report
79. Meedan
80. MENA Prison Forum
81. MENA Rights Group
82. Middle East Matters (MEM)
83. Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)
84. Mnemonic
85. Najda for Human rights
86. Nawaat
87. New Narratives

88. Nouvelles Rencontres d’Averroès (Marseille)
89. Orient XXI
90. Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)
91. PEN America
92. PEN International
93. Press Club Belarus
94. Rachma Media
95. Raseef22
96. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
97. RESURJ l Global south-led transnational feminist alliance
98. Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center
99. Rory Peck Trust
100. Rozana Media
101. Rural Media Network Pakistan
102. Rusted Radishes
103. Samir Kassir Foundation
104. Share3 Media (Syria)
105. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
106. SMEX
107. Start Point
108. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
109. Syrians for Truth and Justice – STJ
110. TAFNIED
111. The Alternative Policy Institute (BADIL)
112. The Funambulist
113. The New Humanitarian
114. The Key Magazine
115. The Legal Agenda
116. The Markaz Review
117. The Public Source
118. The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa (WHRDMENA)
119. The Syria Campaign

120. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
121. UMAM Documentation & Research
122. Union of Journalists in Lebanon
123. Verify
124. Vita-Activa.Org
125. Wasl Rights
126. Women for Justice Foundation (WJF)
127. Women Journalist Alliance
128. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
129. Zawia3
130. Journalisme & Citoyenneté / Sahafa Med

Published at https://humena.org/mada-masr-shutdown-lina-attalah-egypt/
HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · info@humena.org