

## **In Solidarity with Egyptian Fact-Checking and Independent Media Platform Matsadaash**

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, independent media outlets, and individuals, join together to condemn the targeting of [Egyptian fact-checking and independent media platform Matsadaash](#) by Egyptian security services.

On August 19, 2023 at 1:00 am, Egyptian security forces [raided](#) the home of Matsadaash journalist Karim Asaad in al-Shorouk, Cairo, and arrested him. During the raid, forces [assaulted](#) Asaad and his wife, threatening to harm their two and a half year old son; logged into the Matsadaash platform and deleted two Facebook posts; and seized all phones and computers from the home, in addition to pieces of jewelry and 8,000 EGP. Following the raid, Asaad was taken into custody; as of the writing of this statement, he has been forcibly disappeared, his location remains unknown, and he has not been afforded access to his attorneys at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR).

This incident takes place following [heightened targeting](#) of the Matsadaash team around their coverage of [a story](#) involving a private plane that had been seized in Zambia, had originated in Egypt, and had 5.7 million USD in cash and 127 kilograms of gold-plated metal bars on board. Since the story first broke, Matsadaash put out a number of posts fact-checking and verifying the identity of the Egyptian nationals arrested alongside the plane's seizure; those arrested include gold merchants, defense contractors, and former and current Egyptian security officials. The two posts since deleted by Egyptian security officials who gained access to the account during the raid on Asaad's home detailed the identities of two of the six Egyptians detained in Zambia, one of whom was allegedly a former police officer and the other of whom was allegedly a former military officer. Over the last few months, Matsadaash has been the target of a vicious smear campaign and lawsuits directed at the platform and its staff.

In 2018, Matsadaash was founded by the [late Egyptian journalist Mohamed Aboelgheit](#) while he resided abroad in London. The platform is made up of a group of Egyptian journalists committed to combating "the cascade of false or misleading news"; to fact checking statements made by government officials, media professionals, and public figures; and to producing in-depth reporting and open-source investigations. Asaad is one of the platform's journalists, is a graduate of the Faculty of Mass Communication, and has been practicing as a journalist for the last ten years.

We, the undersigned, call on Egyptian authorities to immediately release Karim Asaad from custody and to drop all charges against him. We call on authorities to halt their targeting of the Matsadaash platform. Independent journalism and fact-checking are critical in any free society and Egyptian authorities' failure to allow free exercises of expression to thrive flies in the face of a purported commitment to dialogue and respect for human rights. The crackdown on the Matsadaash platform and the arrest of Karim Asaad are alarming escalations on independent media and freedom of expression that cannot be allowed to stand.

## **Signatories**

## Civil Society Organizations and Independent Media Outlets

- Access Now
- Alternative Press Syndicate - Lebanon
- Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies
- Center for International Policy
- CIVICUS
- Daraj
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
- EgyptWide for Human Rights
- El Nadeem Center against Violence and Torture
- INSM for Digital Rights
- Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms
- Law and Democracy Support Foundation
- MENA Rights Group
- Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
- Raseef22
- Red Line for Gulf
- Refugees Platform In Egypt (RPE)
- Samir Kassir Foundation
- Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR)
- SMEX
- Start Point
- Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research
- The Freedom Initiative
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- Virtual Activism
- WHRDMENA Coalition
- Women for Justice Foundation

## Individuals

- Abdelrahman ElGendy, Egyptian Writer
- Abdelrahman Fares
- Ahmad Abdelfattah, Human Rights Defender
- Ahmed Abdelhalim
- Ahmed Salem, Executive Director of Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
- Ahmed Samih
- Aida Seif El Dawla, Cofounder of El Nadim Center, Egypt
- Alaa Azzam, Egyptian Journalist

- Alia Ibrahim, Daraj
- Anwar Al Bunni
- Christin El-kholy
- Dr. Aymen Zaghdoudi, Media Law Assistant Professor, Tunisia
- Badr Elbendary, Freedom of Expression Assistance at Vial Voices
- Bahey Eldin Hassan, Director of Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Basma Mostafa, Investigative Journalist
- Dr. Courtney C. Radsch, UCLA Institute for Technology, Law and Policy
- Elisa Massimino, Human Rights Institute, Georgetown University Law Center
- Elsy Moufarrej, Coordinator of the Alternative Press Syndicate
- Emad Mubarak Hassan
- Esraa Fehead, Human Rights Defender
- Faisal Adel
- Hajar Raissouni, Journalist
- Halem Henish
- Hanan Badr, Professor
- Heba Ghannam, American University in DC
- Hossam el-Hamalawy, Journalist
- Ibrahim Ezzeldin, Urban Researcher and Human Rights Advocate
- Ibrahim Heggi, Researcher
- Iman Gad, Human Rights Defender
- Kawther Alkholy, Women for Justice Foundation
- Magda Adly, Physician
- Mahienour El-Massry, Lawyer
- Mai El-Sadany, Human Rights Lawyer
- Marlyn Tadros, Professor
- Marwa Fatafta, Access Now
- Miray Philips, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
- Mohamed Lotfy, Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Mohamed Mokhtar, Human Rights Defender
- Mohammad El Taher, Researcher and Technologist
- Mona Hamed Imam, Psychiatrist
- Mostafa Al-a'sar, Egyptian Journalist and Researcher
- Nancy Okail, President and CEO, Center for International Policy, Washington DC
- Nour Khalil
- Nourhan Fahmy, Egyptian Human Rights Lawyer and Researcher
- Nourhanne Charaf Eddine
- Obai Kurd Ali, Accountability Manager for The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
- Omar Taleb, Lebanese Lawyer
- Ramy Shaath
- Ramy Yaacoub
- Samar Elhussieny, Human Rights Defender
- Sara Mohamed, Human Rights Researcher and Advocate
- Sayed Nasr, Human Rights Defender

- Shimaa Samy, Journalist and Researcher
- Shorouk Amgad, Human Rights Defender
- Sofian Philip Naceur, Journalist
- Solafa Magdy, Journalist
- Suzan Fayyad, Psychiatrist, El Nadim Center