

Al Jazeera condemns death sentence for journalists

The Egyptian Criminal Court sentenced Ibrahim Helal, former director of news at Al Jazeera's Arabic channel, and Alaa Sablan, identified by the prosecution as an Al Jazeera journalist, to death on Saturday, 18 June 2016.



Dr Mostefa Souag. Photo credit: Aljazeera

The two journalists were “falsely accused of wrongdoing under what is known as ‘The Espionage Case’, together with the deposed former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, and a number of media professionals”, the Al Jazeera statement read.

“Al Jazeera Media Network denounces, condemns, and entirely rejects the verdict. Al Jazeera believes this is an unjust and politicised sentence that is a part of the ruthless campaign against freedom of speech and expression, in order to muzzle the voice of free press.

“Al Jazeera finds the sentence incriminating to the profession of journalism, which all international laws and legislation seek to protect, and to all journalists, who should be enabled to report with objectivity, professionalism, and integrity.”

In his comments on the sentence, Dr Mostefa Souag, acting director general of Al Jazeera Media Network, said: “The sentence issued by the Egyptian Criminal court is considered an entire failure for the justice and court system in Egypt; a country classified as one of the most dangerous places for journalists to work in.

“This sentence is only one of many politicised sentences that target Al Jazeera and its employees. They are illogical

convictions and legally baseless. Al Jazeera strongly denounces targeting its journalists and stands by the other journalists who have also been sentenced.”

Souag pointed out that all the sentences issued and all the legal cases presented to Egyptian courts against Al Jazeera’s journalists, since deposing the former president Mohamed Morsi, were “legally baseless”, and that all the trials were conducted in an environment that “lacked accuracy and integrity”.

He affirmed that all allegations against Ibrahim Helal are totally false and that the only thing such allegations prove is that the Egyptian judiciary system is no longer independent.

Souag confirmed that Al Jazeera is standing by Ibrahim Helal and Alaa Sablan, like it did with all its journalists who were subjected to similar circumstances; and it will not deviate from its editorial policy or code of ethics.

Al Jazeera calls upon the international community and upon international and humanitarian organisations in particular, to show solidarity with the journalists “who received unjust sentences that outrageously oppose all international and regional laws and conventions that clearly support the protection of journalists and incriminate all forms of assault against them”.

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