First UA: 115/2026 Index: MDE 12/1633/2026 Egypt Date: 3 November 2026

URGENT ACTION

MADA MASR FACES CLOSURE, EDITOR RISKS JAIL

Lina Attalah, editor-in-chief of independent Egyptian media outlet Mada Masr, faced criminal trial on November 11, 2026 on charges of "spreading false information" solely for the outlet's independent journalism. In separate proceedings on October 27, the New Cairo Misdemeanors Court convicted Lina Attalah of "managing an unlicensed website", fined her three million Egyptian pounds, and ordered Mada Masr's closure. The authorities must drop the charges against Lina Attalah, quash the closure order against Mada Masr, and allow it to operate freely.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- Click here to report your action(s) on ***UA 115.26***. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Public Prosecutor Mohamed Shawky Ayyad
Email: m.office@ppo.gov.eg;
Fax: +202 2577 4716;
X: @EgyptianPPO

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

CC: Egyptian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Mohamed Hamdy ElMolla
3521 International Court, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Email: embassy@egyptembassy.net
ambassador@egyptembassy.net

Dear Counselor,

I am concerned about the prosecution of prominent journalist **Lina Attalah** and the threat of forced closure facing Mada Masr, one of Egypt's leading independent media outlets. On November 11, 2026, Lina Attalah faced trial on charges of "spreading false information" and "operating a website without a license", solely in connection with Mada Masr's independent reporting. In separate proceedings on October 27, 2026, the New Cairo Misdemeanors Court convicted Lina Attalah in her capacity as editor-in-chief of managing an unlicensed website, imposed the maximum fine of three million Egyptian pounds, and ordered the closure of Mada Masr. The proceedings raised serious fair trial concerns. The judge refused to grant defense lawyers request for an adjournment to give them adequate time to prepare and rejected their requests to submit additional documents and summon witnesses.

Mada Masr has repeatedly sought a license since 2018. The authorities have either failed to respond to its applications or refused authorization. The outlet should not face closure, which can never be a proportionate sanction because of a licensing system that the authorities have used to obstruct its work.

I urge you to ensure that all charges against Lina Attalah are immediately dropped since they related solely to Mada Masr's independent reporting, and that she is not detained for exercising her right to freedom of expression. I further urge you to quash the closure order against Mada Masr and halt any measures to enforce Mada's property seizure pending their reversal. Finally, I urge you to grant Mada Masr a license to operate, lift the blocking of its website, and allow Mada Masr to operate freely.

Yours sincerely,

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lina Attalah, 44, is a prominent Egyptian journalist, co-founder and editor-in-chief of Mada Masr. Established in June 2013, the outlet publishes in Arabic and English and is internationally recognized for its investigative reporting and editorial independence. It has continued working despite repeated website blocking, staff arrests, an office raid, and judicial harassment.

Mada Masr has repeatedly sought a license to operate since 2018. Applications submitted in 2018 and 2020 went unanswered. In 2022, the outlet learned that its application had been rejected without reasons being provided, and its subsequent court challenge was unsuccessful. After the Supreme Council for Media Regulation identified allegedly missing documents during a 2023 hearing, Mada Masr submitted a fresh application in 2026 addressing those requirements but received no response.

Under international human rights standards, the authorities must not use licensing requirements to silence independent media or punish journalists for operating without authorization they have repeatedly sought. Forcing a media outlet to close constitutes an exceptionally severe restriction on freedom of expression and is not a proportionate response to operating without government authorization. The conviction and associated penalties must be overturned, and Mada Masr must be allowed to operate freely.

Over the past six years, Lina Atallah and her Mada Masr colleagues have faced six politically motivated prosecutions over their reporting. Most recently, on August 4, 2025, the authorities summoned Lina Atallah for questioning on unfounded charges, including “spreading false news” and “operating a website without a license,” over an article published on July 31, 2025, about deteriorating detention conditions in Badr 3 prison. She was released on bail pending investigation. Criminal investigations against her and Mada Masr staff remain open in five cases.

The prosecution of Lina Attalah and the court order to close Mada Masr mark a further escalation in Egypt’s protracted crackdown on independent media. Since 2016, the authorities have tightened their control over the media, subjecting dozens of journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecution on unfounded terrorism-related charges, and dismissal for expressing critical views. Security forces have raided independent media outlets, while authorities have blocked hundreds of websites, including Mada Masr. Media and cybercrime legislation adopted in 2018 further expanded the authorities’ powers to restrict independent journalism and criminalize online expression.

The latest proceedings against Lina Attalah come shortly after the arbitrary arrest of six journalists from the investigative platform Matsadaash in September 2026. Their detention sparked solidarity protests, including a sit-in at the Egyptian Journalists’ Syndicate beginning on October 3. On October 5, authorities questioned journalist **Rasha Azab**, who participated in the sit-in, over a social media post criticizing the interior ministry, accused her of promoting terrorist acts and released her on bail of EGP 10,000. These successive attacks demonstrate the authorities’ determination to silence independent reporting and punish those who defend it.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: May 3, 2027

NAME AND PRONOUN: Lina Attalah (She/Her)