

22 [newspapers](#) suspend Sunday edition to protests press clampdown

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CAIRO: A total of 22 independent and opposition daily newspapers did not publish on Sunday in protest of the lengthy jail sentences recently handed down to several journalists.

The newspapers were *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, *Al-Badil*, *Al-Dostour*, *Al-Osbou*, *Al-Fajr*, *Al-Midan*, *Al-Forsan*, *Sout Al-Omah*, *Al-Ahali*, *Al-Mogaz*, *Al-Arabi Al-Nassery*, *Al-Gamaheer*, *Al-Karama*, *Nahdat Masr*, *Al-Nahar*, *Al-Alam Al-Youm*, *Al-Mawqef Al-Arabi*, *Al-Mal*, *Al-Khamis*, *Al-Ahrar*, *Al-Wafd* and *Al Ghad*.

"The newspapers' position is a very good and [this protest] is positive," Hafez Abu Saeda, director of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), told *Daily News Egypt*.

Abu Saeda added that this form of protest should not be seen in a negative light, as some believe it to be. "On the contrary, it is positive and has been carried out successfully. [It] will definitely force the government to take action."

The protest came one week after the postponement of *Al-Dostour* editor Ibrahim Eissa's trial, at the request of his lawyers who asked for more time to investigate the nine lawsuits filed against him.

Eissa is accused of publishing wrong information about the president's health and spreading rumors that threatened foreign investments in Egypt and caused public panic. Eight other lawsuits were filed by lawyers affiliated with the National Democratic Party (NDP) accusing Eissa of "causing them emotional damage" after publishing these rumors.

Two weeks ago, Adel Hammouda, editor of *Al-Fajr* weekly, Wael Al-Ibrashy, editor of *Sout Al-Omah* weekly, and Abd Al-Halim Kandil, former editor of *Al-Karama* newspaper, along with Eissa were all sentenced to a year in prison and a LE 20,000 fine for intentionally insulting President Mubarak, his son and the ruling party.

The chief editor of *Al-Wafd* newspaper, Anwar Al-Hawari, as well as Mahmoud Galeb, and Amir Salem — two journalists at the same newspaper — also received a two-year jail sentence for misquoting the Minister of Justice.

Al-Badil editor Mohammed Sayyed Said is also facing prosecution for writing about President Hosni Mubarak's health.

Despite the fact that this clampdown came within the span of a couple of weeks, it was met with little action from the Press Syndicate and the Ministry of Information.

Last Thursday, *Al-Osbou* editor Mostafa Bakry wrote a front page article confirming that his newspaper would join the strike.

The article criticized the Press Syndicate for postponing a meeting that was supposed to take place with members of a specialized committee, as well as the journalists on the Syndicate's board of trustees.

The newspaper held the Press Syndicate fully responsible for not standing up for journalists during their time of need.

Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper published a similar statement on the front page of its Saturday issue, saying they will not print on Sunday for the sake of freedom of the press and against the indictment of 11 journalists.

In the statement, the paper cited that the reason for not issuing a Sunday edition is because "it is the elder sister to all Egyptian newspapers, as it is the number one newspaper in terms of circulation and credibility."

The statement added that the newspaper is also protesting the strict security siege imposed by the government on information.

"*Al-Masry Al-Youm* also protests against the National Democratic Party that only supports the national and government newspapers...*Al-Masry Al-Youm* protests against state-run newspapers which fill their coffers with taxpayers' money and seek only to please one person as if he is the whole nation, the earth, the people, the water and the sky," read the statement.

Finally, *Al-Masry Al-Youm* said that by participating in the strike, it is protesting against state security, the Press Syndicate as well as the Egyptian political system "that has reached its worst stages."

On his part, Abu Saeda denounced the imprisonment of journalists, and said that the state of press freedom has deteriorated to reach an all time low.