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Country: Egypt



Every country is full of stories untold, problems unreported and people who have never been given the chance to have their voices heard.

Twelve young journalists in Egypt searched and discovered such stories and succeeded in bringing to the surface some of the biggest problems that Egyptian people have to deal with and the media continue to ignore. And they have been awarded for that, after participating in the Media Diversity Institute's Journalism Contest.

"It was an unexpected surprise to me; it is really an evaluation that means a lot to me, it motivates me to continue, to progress and to develop my skills for the best", Shereen Gamal Hatem, a young female awardee said.

This is the first prize for most of the awardees as one of the contest's objectives was to encourage and reward young journalists for their professionalism and their commitment to responsible and balanced coverage. Mohamed, another award winner, commented that he felt that his efforts were not in vain and that finally young journalists, who are trying against all odds

to be professional, have been awarded for their hard work.

Their articles covered a wide range of topics such as politics, corruption, economic issues, the environment, problems in rural areas and marginalised communities. A wedding ceremony which ended up to be a funeral during a terrorist attack in a Coptic Orthodox Church, the death of 13 immigrants in the seas outside Alexandria and the narrative of a hero of the Egyptian revolution who lost his eyes during the clashes are some of them. One of the award winning journalists was also hosted on an Egyptian TV chat show. Inas Kamal Al-Deen Ramadan was invited on to the primetime show 'For Egypt's Sake' to discuss her award winning article about women in the Egyptian army . MDI awarded the young journalists under 12 different categories and gave them a financial reward of 5000 EGP each, which were presented by the media personality Yasser Abdel Azziz at a Ceremony in Cairo

The jury that decided on the winners was comprised by 6 members, and the final selection was made by *Hosam El Sokkari*, a TV presenter and former Head of BBC Arabic and *David Harrison*, a multi-award winning journalist for the Sunday Times.



The importance of the empowerment of young journalists, with initiatives such as the MDI award, derives from one more reason; the challenging environment of media in Egypt. The journalists awarded explain the problems they have to deal with in their everyday working routine. "I faced challenges concerning the social trend of this profession, controlled by males whose opinion of the woman is a traditional one depriving her of working in certain fields" noted Safaa Essam while she added that political polarization is another great obstacle. Other

problems highlighted were the limited access to technology but also the difficulty to get people talk to you. “The sources (interviewees) are afraid to entrust the information to the journalists” reported Mohamed Rafa't Hassan Nassar underlining the difficulty of field work when communities are divided. “The most significant difficulties I had faced were my feeling that I am insecure during the field coverage of the demonstrations during the last year ” said Ismaeli Abdel Hamed Moussa Salama. Lack of security is a problem that many of the awardees have referred to along with the issue of press freedom and the lack of appropriate training.

The award was the culmination of a training programme for journalists run by MDI and funded by the UK through the Arab Partnership, as part of a larger project entitled 'Inclusive Parliament: Building citizen participation in the political process in Egypt through better media, parliamentary and civil society interaction'.

The Media Diversity Institute has been training and supporting journalists in Egypt since 2007.