

Australian journalist marks a year in Egyptian jail

CAIRO, EGYPT / SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Australian Al-Jazeera journalist Peter Greste marks a year in prison in Egypt today, with Foreign Minister Julie Bishop downplaying hopes that he will be released before a 1 January appeal...



Egypt is famous for its pyramids, and infamous for repression of the media.
(Image: Courtesy Jon Bodsworth, via Wikimedia Commons)

Bishop last week expressed some optimism that Greste, convicted in June along with two Al-Jazeera colleagues for defaming Egypt and aiding banned Islamists, could soon be free.

But on Monday she said there had been mixed signals from Egyptian authorities, adding that Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry had warned her not to expect any developments before this week's appeal.

"We're doing what we can to bring Peter Greste home as soon as possible and I remain hopeful that we can get that message through to the Egyptian government, that we want him home," Bishop told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"Yet in the meantime, the foreign minister has said to me that we have to await the appeal. So there are different messages coming from different sections of the Egyptian government."

Greste has been jailed since December 29, 2013, along with Canadian-Egyptian Mohamed Fahmy and Egyptian Baher Mohamed in a case that sparked a global outcry.

Greste and Fahmy were sentenced to seven years, and Mohamed was jailed for 10 years, prompting claims their trial was politically motivated and demands for a presidential pardon.

In a letter to his supporters last week, Greste said he felt proud at what had been achieved so far in stirring political debate about the right to a free press and the persecution of journalists in Egypt.

"We have galvanised an incredible coalition of political, diplomatic and media figures, as well as a vast army of social media supporters for that most basic of rights - the right to know," Greste said.

"Never has cleared-eyed, critical, sceptical journalism been more necessary to help make sense of a world overloaded with information," he said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said earlier this year he could not consider a plea of clemency or a pardon until all legal proceedings have been concluded, including an appeal. But Greste's parents Lois and Juris Greste said they hoped their son and his colleagues would be freed soon.

"We do have confidence in the integrity of the Egyptian appeals system in reaching what to us is only one possible decision - and that is to overturn the verdict and let all three of them free," his father told the ABC.

Source: *AFP, via I-Net Bridge*

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