

Press Release

NUJ calls demonstration after Egyptian journalists attacked

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The National Union of Journalists is to hold a demonstration outside Bush House, London, on Monday (5/6) in support of two BBC producers - both NUJ members - who were attacked after covering a meeting of the General Assembly of the Journalists' Syndicate in the Egyptian capital, Cairo.

The attack on Dina Samak and Dina Gameel (who had been covering the event for the BBC Arabic Service) took place at 5pm on May 25 as they were leaving the syndicate's garage, accompanied by another journalist from a weekly newspaper, Gihan Saaban, and a young trainee Karim Al Shaer.

The security agents outside the building pointed at their car and in less than a minute a taxi turned up, blocked the way, and about five thugs got out and surrounded the vehicle. Around 15 to 20 more thugs came from both sides of the street and started hitting the car, breaking the windscreen and a side window while swearing and shouting.

They tried to drag Dina Samak out of the car and succeeded in grabbing Gihan Saaban. While Karim Al Shaer was shouting and trying to defend her they took him out of the car, beat him in the street and put him in a police car. At this moment, a number of judges and journalists rushed out of the building and the thugs left.

On the advice of the Journalists' Syndicate, the journalists went to file a complaint at the Maarouf police station in Cairo. They were kept waiting for over two hours and when they finally were seen, police refused to register their complaint. On 27 May, the Journalists Syndicate lodged a formal complaint with the Attorney General about the entire incident.

This is not the first time that a BBC correspondent in Egypt has been attacked - Mohamed Taha was once attacked while covering parliamentary elections. And a number of journalists are still in detention after being arrested while covering, or taking part in the demonstrations in solidarity with reformist judges.

Journalists in Egypt are now targeted not because of their political views but because of the very fact that they are journalists. Dina Samak's husband, a journalist, was arrested more than a month ago and is still held without a charge.

For more information contact Pierre Vicary on 0207 557 1197 or 07803 726 476.

Note to Editors: The demonstration will take place outside BBC World Service, Bush House, Aldwych, London, from 1200-1300 on Monday 5th June.