

# France accused of attack on press freedom after journalist arrest

mardi 19 septembre 2023, par [WILLSHER Kim](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 19 septembre 2023).

**Ariane Lavrilleux, who reported on leaked documents alleging French intelligence used to target civilians in Egypt, is in custody**

France has been accused of an unacceptable attack on press freedom after the arrest of an investigative journalist who reported on leaked documents that alleged French intelligence was used to target civilians in Egypt.

Police arrived at the home of Ariane Lavrilleux at dawn on Tuesday and took her into custody after searching her property. The news agency AFP reported that she was being questioned by agents of the DGSI, France's domestic intelligence agency.

Lavrilleux wrote a series of articles published on the investigative website Disclose in November 2021 that were based on hundreds of leaked classified documents. These allegedly showed how information from a French counter-intelligence operation in Egypt was used by Cairo for "a campaign of arbitrary killings" against smugglers operating along the Libyan border.

Disclose described the arrest as "an unacceptable attack on the secrecy of [press] sources". The Société des Journalistes at France Télévisions and Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) [\[1\]](#) also condemned the targeting of the journalist. "We fear that the DGSI's actions will undermine the secrecy of the sources," RSF said.

Virginie Marquet, the lawyer for Lavrilleux and Disclose, said they had only published information of public interest and condemned the arrest.

"I am appalled and worried about the escalation in attacks on the freedom to inform and the coercive measures taken against the Disclose journalist. This search risks seriously undermining the confidentiality of journalists' sources," Marquet said.

The Disclose articles said the leaked documents showed the information from French intelligence was used in at least 19 bombings against smugglers in the region between 2016 and 2018. The documents also showed officials within the French government had warned that the Egyptian state could use the information from the counter-intelligence operation codenamed Sirli, but the operation was allowed to continue.

"The aim of this latest episode of unacceptable intimidation of Disclose journalists is clear : to identify our sources that revealed the Sirli military operation in Egypt. In November 2021, Disclose revealed an alleged campaign of arbitrary executions orchestrated by the Egyptian dictatorship of President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, with the complicity of the French state, based on several hundred documents marked 'defence - confidential'," Disclose wrote in a statement.

France's ministry for the armed forces filed a legal complaint for "violation of national defence

secrets” after the articles were published. The Paris prosecutors’ office opened a formal investigation in July 2022 that was handed over to the DGSI, which argues the published information could have identified “a protected agent”.

### **Kim Willsher in Paris**

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### **P.-S.**

- The Guardian. Tue 19 Sep 2023 18.04 BST :  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/19/france-accused-attack-press-freedom-journalist-arrest>
- Kim Willsher’s articles in the Guardian :  
<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/kim-willsher>
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[1] <https://rsf.org/fr>