Re. Arrest of Ahmed Mansour in Germany

I write regarding the arrest of Al-Jazeera journalist, Ahmed Mansour, in Berlin on 20th June 2015 at the request of the Egyptian authorities. Further to my letter to your predecessor dated 25th June 2014, regarding the in absentia conviction of several Al Jazeera journalists (annexed), we are once again concerned by the seemingly politically-motivated use of the criminal justice system by the Egyptian authorities to restrict journalistic activity and freedom of speech.

As you are no doubt aware, cases such as this one inevitably raise questions about what involvement INTERPOL has had in circulating the information that contributed to the arrest. I urge INTERPOL to take the opportunity to clarify publicly what role, if any, it has had.

As you know, INTERPOL has done this previously in the case of William Browder (involving a request from Russia) and the alerts that were circulated by Egypt relating to the prosecution of a number of NGO workers in 2012 (the INTERPOL press notices are attached for your convenience). More specifically, it would be useful to know: (i) whether Egypt has circulated any information relating to Mr Mansour through INTERPOL’s systems; and, if not, (ii) whether INTERPOL has reviewed any requests from Egypt for information to be circulated and what the outcome of such review was.

As you know, Fair Trials has long called for INTERPOL to create safeguards to enable it to detect abusive alerts so that it can prevent them being circulated to the world’s police. We therefore welcomed the recent change to how INTERPOL operates, so that you now review alerts seeking a person’s arrest before circulation. If Egypt did seek an INTERPOL alert in this case, it would provide a valuable indication of how well this new system is operating in practice.

Fair Trials remains committed to working with you and your colleagues to strengthening the safeguards against abuse of INTERPOL’s systems and I am grateful for your continued cooperation.

Jago Russell
Chief Executive, Fair Trials