



## The Marriott Cell: An Epic Journey from Cairo's Scorpion Prison to Freedom

*By Mohamed Fahmy, Carol Shaben*

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### **The Marriott Cell: An Epic Journey from Cairo's Scorpion Prison to Freedom** By Mohamed Fahmy, Carol Shaben

**Award-winning journalist Mohamed Fahmy's widely anticipated account of his wrongful incarceration in Cairo's maximum-security Scorpion Prison for terrorists and political leaders, and his subsequent battle for justice, opens a remarkable window onto the closed world of Islamic fundamentalism and the bloody geopolitical struggles that dominate our headlines. An important book that reads like a political thriller, it is also a testament to the critical importance of journalism today; an inspiring love story that made front-page news; and a profoundly personal drama of one man's fight for freedom.**

On the night of December 29, 2013, Egyptian security forces, in a dramatic raid on the Marriott Hotel, seized Fahmy (Canadian-Egyptian Bureau Chief for Al Jazeera English) and two of his colleagues, Peter Grete and Baher Mohamed, accusing them of fabricating news as members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Their trials became a global cause célèbre condemned as a travesty. But Fahmy also never stopped being a journalist: inside Scorpion he found himself cheek by jowl with notorious Muslim Brotherhood leaders, Al Qaeda fighters, and ISIS sympathizers. Always intrepid, he took advantage of the situation to "interview" the Brotherhood about their aims, gaining exclusive insight into the geopolitical feuds between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE on one hand and Qatar and its allies, including Turkey on the other—interviews that led him to sue his former employer, Al Jazeera, from prison. The complex power brokering of Middle Eastern and Western governments left three men trapped in a web he describes as "Global McCarthyism." But at the heart of the book is an inspiring story of two strong women: Fahmy's wife, Marwa Omara, who used every means possible to fight for his release, bravely risking her safety; and his courageous international human-rights lawyer, Amal Clooney, who championed his battle for freedom.



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**The Marriott Cell: An Epic Journey from Cairo's Scorpion Prison to Freedom** By Mohamed Fahmy, Carol Shaben **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

Review

**Finalist for the 2017 Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize (BC Book Awards)**

“The story . . . is stomach-turning in places. The writing is masterful.” —*Diplomat & International Canada*

“*The Marriott Cell* is a **gripping, fast-paced read**, as one would expect from a story about a journalist in Egypt who suddenly finds himself terrifyingly and wrongfully incarcerated in a notorious prison next to the very people about whom he had been reporting. **But it’s worth pausing to recognize how masterful storytelling can add momentum to an already engrossing narrative.** Award-winning Egyptian Canadian journalist Mohamed Fahmy, with the help of Carol Shaben, nails the art of pacing. The team’s ability to maintain momentum is **a rarity among books written by journalists** about their experience reporting on—even being caught up in—moments of intense conflict. Too often, such books are engaging and interesting, but squander their momentum by devoting giant chunks of text to providing background detail without any sustaining narrative. Not *The Marriott Cell*. . . [C]ompelling.” —*J-Source*

“[A] frightening account of his years of imprisonment, which should be a footnote in future history books on the jihadi struggle in the Middle East.” —*The Independent*

“[A] compelling and sensational account of [Fahmy’s] imprisonment and his fight for freedom.” —*The Hill Times*

“**Urgent, wise, readable, and at times very moving**, the authors have successfully rebooted what has quickly become a stale Canadian mini-genre. . . . Fahmy was a reporter long before he was a prisoner and he’d experienced the worst of the recent Middle Eastern conflagrations and their subsequent fallout. He thus knows that his story is the wire frame for a much larger encounter: This book is about the great, bloody unwinding of his homeland. . . . Apart from functioning as **a stirring memoir and a deeply personal meditation on the nature of conjoined identities** (every immigrant’s bane), Fahmy’s and Shaben’s book also functions as one of the more concise history of the Egyptian revolution I’ve yet read. Having reported his way so deeply through the events leading up to his arrest, there’s very little Fahmy didn’t experience first-hand, and few of the major (and, more interestingly, minor) players he didn’t encounter. The writing is lucid, and his reportorial nous never flags, even when terrible things are happening.” —**Richard Poplak**, author of *Braking Bad*, *The Globe and Mail*

“Mohamed Fahmy has just published **a remarkable memoir**, *The Marriott Cell: An Epic Journey from Cairo’s Scorpion Prison to Freedom*. It’s a **gripping, compelling and insightful** book . . . that takes us behind the headlines into what it was really like for Mr. Fahmy and those around him.” —Joseph Planta, founding editor of *thecommentary.ca* (interview)

### PRAISE FOR MOHAMED FAHMY:

“Mohamed Fahmy is a journalist’s journalist.” —Ben Makuch, host of *Cyberwar*, *VICE Canada*

“In 2011, as Hosni Mubarak’s government was being ousted in Egypt, [Fahmy] was hired by CNN and won

accolades for his fearless and tenacious work.” —Gloria Galloway, *The Globe and Mail*

“Mohamed Fahmy is an extraordinary professional, a dedicated journalist, very passionate and a strong-willed character.” —**Al Jazeera (interview)**

“I met Mohamed Fahmy in Baghdad in 2003, as both of us were beginning our careers as journalists. Immediately, I admired his bravery and ability to get to the bottom of stories, even in a place as dangerous and opaque as Iraq. His energy was boundless and infectious, and we kept in touch over the years and occasionally crossed paths in our work and travels. . . . All journalists want their work to mean something, but few of us manage to achieve it. Mo could inspire envy with his ability to do amazing work in some of the toughest places; I considered myself lucky to be his friend, and even luckier to finally become his colleague when he was hired by Al Jazeera.” —**David Enders, *Canadian Journalists for Free Expression***

#### About the Author

MOHAMED FAHMY, a dual Canadian-Egyptian citizen lives in Vancouver and works as an adjunct professor at UBC. He has reported on the Middle East and North Africa for CNN, *the LA Times*, and BBC. In 2011 he and his CNN associates were honored with a Peabody Award for the network's coverage of the Arab Spring; he also co-authored the photo documentary *Egyptian Freedom Story*. In 2012 he won The Tom Renner Investigative Reporting Award for producing the CNN Freedom Project documentary series *Death in the Desert*, which exposed the trafficking of Sub-Sahara Africans to Israel through Sinai-Egypt. He was appointed Al Jazeera English Bureau Chief in 2013. He is the recipient of the Canadian Committee for World Press Freedom Award from UNESCO. He and his wife, Marwa Omara, founded the Fahmy Foundation NGO in 2015, dedicated to providing financial assistance and advocating on behalf of imprisoned journalists and photographers around the world.

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