

OMAR

Egypt

- *CCP Fellow in 2017 at the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany*
- *participated in the CCP workshop »Digital Civil Society«, 2019*
- *Master in Information Technology*



»There is a silent trust that unites the
LGBT community online.«

Omar, after a concert in Cairo in September 2017 by the Lebanese band Mashrou' Leila — whose lead singer is openly gay — around 75 people were arrested because some had waved rainbow flags. How was this crackdown justified?*

People were arrested for >promoting debauchery and prostitution< and inciting immorality, based on law no. 10 from 1961. Technically, homosexuality is not illegal in Egypt, but the regime uses vague laws to prosecute people anyway. For example, if you are checked by the police and are carrying a condom or over 200 Egyptian pounds in cash — which is about ten euros — this can be used as evidence in court. They will claim that you got the money from sex work.

*The fight for the rights of LGBTIQ** is also taking place online. In August 2018, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi approved a so-called cybercrime law, which regulates Internet activities and basically legalised censorship. What are the biggest security threats that activists face online?*

The law granted the government more authority for online surveillance, often leading to arrests and imprisonment whenever someone says something that the regime dislikes. That could be a critical post on Facebook, a picture of a rainbow flag or anything else that threatens >society's values< or >national security<. Already marginalised people such as LGBT are even more prone to these threats. For example, if someone gains access to sensitive data such as your sexual orientation, that information will be given to journalists or police officers, and they'll start blackmailing you. If they use that information to out you publicly, your life will

be ruined. It happened to many of my friends. Security forces also started to create fake profiles on dating apps like Grindr to target LGBT people.

As a CCP Fellow you worked with the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany (LSVD). What was the most impressive moment during your fellowship?

I still remember the day when I first saw the rainbow flag waving in front of the historical city hall in Cologne. It was in September 2017, shortly after my arrival in Germany and after the Mashrou' Leila concert in Cairo. I thought about those friends in Egypt that had been arrested just because they had waved a similar flag.

*name changed

**LGBTIQ = Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersexual, queer