ISSA Egypt President:
Cybersecurity Is Everyone's Responsibility

Egypt Chapter President Mohamed N. El-Guindy

New Senior Member and ISSA Egypt Chapter President Mohamed N. El-Guindy has taken to the airwaves, interviewed with newspapers and magazines, participated in NGOs and governmental initiatives, and much more in his struggles to advance the state of cybersecurity in Egypt and the region, and his efforts are starting to pay off. ISSA asked El-Guindy if he would be willing to comment on the state of infosec in Egypt, some of the challenges Egypt faces, what he has been doing to improve the environment, and his advice to other ISSA chapter leaders. Here is what he had to say:

ISSA: Mohamed, what is the state of cybersecurity and cybercrime in Egypt?

Mohamed: Egypt is a country located, of course, in the Middle East. This is a region that is still much in need of cybersecurity, from both a technical and legislative perspective. Cybercrime in the region is on the rise due to the increase in Internet usage by governments—and also by users. The increase in the number of users combined with the region's lack of technical and legislative control makes the region vulnerable to all types of cyber attacks. In addition, the political unrest that spans Middle Eastern countries is increasing "politically motivated" attacks that target government facilities. Some of this can be attributed to unemployed but educated youth: We will witness more destructive cyber attacks from "script kiddies" who have the time and access to all types of online hacking tools.

ISSA: What are Egypt's greatest challenges?

Mohamed: We need to deal with cybersecurity as an important part of our national security strategy. This will be difficult for policymakers on many fronts. For example, I was invited to participate with the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Arab League in a workshop to finalize the ESCWA template for cyber laws. It was an outstanding achievement. However, no country has applied any of the principles for many reasons—mostly political. Another challenge is that cybersecurity awareness is still very poor among technology users here. For example, if you look at threat reports by major antivirus companies, you will find that Egypt is among the most phished countries in the world and also one of the most infected by malware. If we look back to the 2007 cyber attacks on Estonia, we will find many reports revealed that destructive infrastructure attacks in Estonia could be traced back to Egypt. Of course, it was not the Egyptian government, but it was traced to hundreds if not thousands of zombie machines in Egypt infected with bots and exploited by hackers. Consequently, I can tell you that one of Egypt's biggest challenges is to develop a strategy to secure our critical infrastructure. Egypt recently established the Supreme Council on Cybersecurity. It's a good step, and it shows that they hear our voice on the importance of cybersecurity in the 21st century.

ISSA: Your technology TV show is a very cool and effective tool for spreading the word on cybersecurity. How did you get that started?

Mohamed: I have always believed that hard work will eventually bear fruit. I also believe that my knowledge is not mine to keep—I must give back something to society. I started volunteering for ISSA in 2008, which helped me a lot in my career and also in my field research. I became involved with the Chartered Institute for IT in the UK as an assessor. This experience was of great value, and I was fortunate to meet the right people who helped me get into the media industry. They believed in my experience and I'm grateful to them. Delivering a technical TV show in Egypt was not an easy task, but thanks to Mr. Tarek Nour, the owner of Cairo Centric TV channel who believed in the idea, we are achieving success.

ISSA: Mohamed, I also understand that ISSA is now listed on the Egyptian government's website in regards to cybersecurity. What advice would you give to other chapters to build their ISSA voice?

Mohamed: So many other ISSA chapters are doing a great job. I believe that social networking tools are the best way to maximize their exposure. Live events and seminars are great and necessary, but I can see that volunteering work should utilize social media to be always connected with the society. In addition, a good relationship with the media is important to spread the word. I believe that cybersecurity is everyone's responsibility. It's not only for cybersecurity professionals.

The Open Forum

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