

January XX, 2022

## **Joint Letter by Members of Parliaments Urging the Establishment of a UN Human Rights Monitoring Mechanism on Egypt**

Dear Foreign Ministers,  
Dear Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council,

We, the undersigned members of parliaments, are writing to urge you to secure the establishment of a UN human rights monitoring and reporting mechanism on Egypt, taking resolute action to that end at the upcoming March 2022 session of the UN Human Rights Council.

We are extremely concerned about the international community's persistent failure to take any meaningful action to address Egypt's human rights crisis. This failure, along with continued support to the Egyptian government and reluctance to even speak up against pervasive abuses has only deepened the Egyptian authorities' sense of impunity.

Since the 2013 ousting of former President Mohamed Morsi, the Egyptian authorities have been ruling the country with an iron fist, brutally and systematically repressing all forms of dissent and severely curtailing civic space. The Egyptian authorities have arbitrarily detained thousands of perceived dissidents, including scores of human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, and peaceful activists and opposition politicians, including Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, Zyad el-Elaimy, Ibrahim Ezz el-Din, Haytham Mohamdeen, Hoda Abdelmoneim, Abdel Nasser Salama, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, and Mohamed al-Baqer, among many others. Many are held in indefinite pre-trial detention or are serving sentences handed out following grossly unfair trials, including by military courts and emergency courts whose judgements are not subject to appeal. Those released are subjected to abusive extrajudicial measures by National Security Agency officers to stifle any activism.

All this happens in a context of rampant torture by police and National Security Agency officers, which according to the [UN Committee Against Torture](#) and NGOs is a systematic practice in the country. Egypt's notoriously squalid prison conditions already claimed the lives of dozens since 2013, including former president Morsi and film-maker Shady Habash.

The few remaining independent human rights organizations still able to operate in Egypt do so at great risk; their activities are severely curtailed by a repressive NGO law, as well as travel bans, asset freezes, and persistent harassment by security agencies and other institutional actors. Amid severe restrictions and intimidations, local and international organizations continue to document a wide range of human rights abuses by Egyptian authorities, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions, the arbitrary detention of women on "morality" grounds, the trial of children along with adults, the continued crackdown on members of the LGBTI community, and the arrest and prosecution of members of religious minorities over blasphemy charges, to name but a few.

Furthermore, in 2020 Egypt became the world's third top executioner, with 107 recorded executions. In 2021, the execution spree continued with at least 83 recorded so far, including following grossly unfair trials.

Despite this devastating picture, the international community has by and large limited its reaction to rare, occasional statements of concern at the UN Human Rights Council. Such statements often start by acknowledging Egypt's role for regional security, stability and migration management, concerns that its international partners seem to have largely privileged over – and arguably at the expense of – the fundamental rights of people in Egypt, in a false dichotomy of stability versus human rights which we reject in the strongest possible terms. Likewise, public statements made by officials in high-level visits and in bilateral meetings often praise the government at any cost.

We take note of some recent modest steps taken or announced by the Egyptian authorities, yet regret that these steps hardly constitute anything more than an effort to whitewash their dismal human rights record, and are unlikely to have any significant impact on Egypt's human rights crisis.

The new “national human rights strategy”, drafted in an untransparent manner and without consultation with independent human rights organizations, overlooks grave past and ongoing human rights concerns such as the prolonged arbitrary detention of peaceful critics, enforced disappearances, and torture in detention facilities, and it fails to identify concrete steps to hold those responsible to account. Instead, the strategy blames lack of awareness by Egyptian people, political parties and civil society for the current human rights crisis.

After the lifting of the state of emergency, the Egyptian parliament passed a series of emergency-law-like provisions expanding military courts' jurisdiction over civilians and further undermining the right to information, which de facto have only further and permanently entrenched the state of emergency into Egypt's legal system. Furthermore, the Emergency State Security Courts have sentenced opposition MP and human rights lawyer Zyad el-Elaimy, journalists Hossam Moaness and Hisham Fouad, activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, human rights lawyer Mohamed al-Baqer, and blogger Mohamed “Oxygen” Ibrahim, and will continue to rule on cases already referred to them, including those of Patrick Zaki, Hoda Abdelmoneim, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh and many more.

The latest release of prisoners to reduce prison overcrowding excluded countless human rights defenders and political activists. Finally, while the release of activists Ramy Shaath and Ramy Kamel is indeed welcomed, this should not distract from the thousands of political prisoners who remain in arbitrary and unjust detention.

While largely cosmetic, these small developments are a sign that the Egyptian authorities are sensitive to international pressure as they follow the March 2021 Finland-led cross-regional [statement](#) on Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council – remarkably, only the second such statement since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power, despite his government's sustained, widespread and systematic abuses. The previous one, in [2014](#), ultimately failed to secure lasting human rights change in the country, also due to a lack of collective follow-up by UN member states. This must not reoccur.

The March 2021 joint statement should not remain a one-off gesture. We urge you to increase your outreach to partner countries in order to build momentum within the UN Human Rights Council for the **establishment of a long overdue monitoring and reporting mechanism on Egypt**, while also significantly increasing pressure on the Egyptian authorities through your bilateral relations to resolutely address Egypt's human rights crisis and secure meaningful progress.

Yours faithfully,