



United Nations Human Rights Council: 22<sup>nd</sup> Session

Item 4: General Debate

Oral Intervention

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

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Thank you Mr. President

Mr. President, a review of the situation in Egypt over the last eight months raises serious concerns about the extent to which the state of human rights in the country has rapidly deteriorated under the current government. The situation of human rights in Egypt is in many ways even direr now than it was prior to the revolution. It would appear that the country has merely traded one form of authoritarianism for another, albeit with some new features.

The independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press were never attacked as fiercely as they have been over the last eight months. Similarly, attacks on peaceful protestors – including through the sexual assault and rape of female protestors – continue to threaten the democratic transition in Egypt and render the transitional justice process all but impossible to implement.

President Morsi's term has thus far witnessed three major human rights-related crises: The first involving executive decrees which undermined the independence of the judiciary and respect for court decisions, the second targeting freedom of speech through attacks on and court cases brought against journalists and media professionals, and the third violating the right to peaceful protest, with both security forces and supporters of the ruling party attacking demonstrators. However, all of these crises remain unresolved, despite the submission of a document with ten demands aimed at ending abuses by the government to President Morsi by the NGO Forum in February. Continued failure by the government to implement real and lasting human rights reforms will only lead to further strife.

Moreover, repressive draft legislation seriously threatens freedom of association and assembly. Indeed, the bill on associations currently being discussed by the parliament would threaten the viability of independent civil society in Egypt by introducing a slew of unprecedented restrictions, including cutting off access to funding for human rights and development NGOs. The law would also “nationalize” NGOs by allowing governmental control over their daily work. Meanwhile, the draft law on assemblies would impose severe restrictions on peaceful protestors without limiting the use of force by or providing sufficient accountability for security forces.

We call on the Human Rights Council to urgently address these issues, and ensure that the Egyptian government begins to respect its international human rights commitments.

Thank you Mr. President