



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour Les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

United Nations Human Rights Council: 22nd Session
Interactive Dialogue Item 2
Oral Intervention
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
28 February, 2013
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Thank you, Mr. President

This Oral Intervention is submitted by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Nazra for Feminist Studies (Egypt), New Woman Foundation (Egypt), and the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Democrates (Tunisia).

Madam High Commissioner: As you noted, Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia have “entered new, complex and delicate phases”. During these transitions, whether or not women attain the ability to actively and openly participate in the affairs of their countries will be a primary factor in determining if real human rights reform and democratization occur.

In Egypt, the transitional period has veered toward increasing violations against protestors, rights defenders, and civil society. Amid an atmosphere of impunity in the country, a pattern of sexual harassment and gang-rapes has emerged; in more than one case, women have been forcibly taken from the site of protests for the purpose of rape and knives have been used to penetrate their vaginas. In all cases, the state authorities have taken no action to prevent these attacks or hold those responsible to account. Instead, the Prime Minister and members of Parliament issued statements blaming these attacks on the women themselves. The failure of the authorities to fulfill their responsibility to secure public spaces for women has resulted in marginalization of women and restricted their participation in protests and public affairs.

In Tunisia, women are mobilizing to retain and improve their human rights. While the previous draft constitution included several worrying provisions regarding women’s rights, the current draft constitution positively upholds gender equality and establishes the state’s responsibility to protect women’s rights. The state of these rights in practice remains precarious, however.

Similarly, Libyan women are struggling to be included in the upcoming constituent assembly as well as to secure provisions in the future constitution to safeguard gender equality and outlaw discrimination based on sex.

We call on the OHCHR, relevant Special Procedures and UN member states to take action to protect the role of women in transitional periods and to speak out strongly and regularly when women are targeted for simply exercising their rights as citizens and human beings.

Thank you Mr. President.