



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

Human Rights Council: 33rd Session
Item 2: General Debate on Update by High Commissioner
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
September 14, 2016

Thank you Mr. President.

The High Commissioner began this session by speaking about states that attack the legitimacy of his office and refuse to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.

We must not forget such actions are only a symptom of a much more dangerous development. In countries throughout the world, governments have begun concerted campaigns to destroy national human rights movements by criminalizing their work and brutally repressing those who dare to speak out against human rights violations.

Egypt epitomizes this approach. Four days from now, a Cairo Criminal Court is expected to rule in a request by an investigative judge to freeze the funds and assets of 11 civil society representatives and some of their close family members all within case no. 173, known as the “Foreign Funding Case”. In July a different criminal court ordered the asset freeze of the founder of another Egyptian rights organization.

If such a order is upheld, many human rights organizations ability to function will be greatly undermined and their offices shut down.

Human rights defenders and NGOs in Egypt are facing an unprecedented crackdown. At least 12 rights defenders have been subjected to a travel ban. More than 21 are under investigation. These individuals, if convicted, could face up to 15 years in prison.

In March this year the high commissioner stated; *“NGOs who have played a valuable role in documenting violations and supporting victims will see their activities completely crippled if this continues.”* What we are witnessing is not only a continuation of the clampdown on rights groups, but a sustained attempt by the Egyptian government to wipe out the national human rights movement.

Civil society, including human rights organizations, has a critical role to play in the country’s future. It must be acknowledged as a partner for reform and progress rather than an enemy. We call on Egypt to drop all charges against human rights defenders and organizations in the country.

Thank you Mr. President.