



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

UN Human Rights Council: Thirty-Fifth Session
Item 4: Human rights situation that requires attention
Oral Intervention: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
15 June 2017

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Mr. President,

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) would like to call attention to the alarming situation of human rights in Egypt. The government's harsh crackdown on human rights defenders and organizations threatens to annihilate Egypt's independent human rights groups.

The authorities continue to use Case 173 of 2011 (the foreign funding case) to wrongly pursue and eliminate Egyptian human rights organizations through politically motivated charges, some of which bear sentences of 25 years in prison.¹ Human rights defenders from more than 37 organizations are facing travel bans, asset freezes and interrogations with a chilling effect on their capacity to protect human rights in the country.²

In May, the investigation judge summoned Mohamed Zaree, the Egypt Office Director of the Cairo Institute,³ who had already been under travel ban for a year. Zaree was charged because of his engagement in the Human Rights Council's own Universal Periodic Review of Egypt.⁴ This is a clear case of reprisal, despite Egypt's current membership in the Human Rights Council and its acceptance of many recommendations arising from the same 2014-15 UPR.⁵

Egypt's crackdown is escalating, with the ratification in May of a widely-condemned law on associations that effectively criminalizes independent NGOs. Given the above, we urge the Human Rights Council to call on Egypt **to repeal the law, and develop a legislative framework that creates a safe environment for Egyptian civil society.** We also call on the Human Rights Council to urge the Egyptian authorities to work diligently toward compliance with the pledges they made by accepting UPR recommendations in 2015, and to cease the harassment and prosecution of civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

¹ Seven Egyptian human rights NGOs, joint background briefing on case no. 173 against human rights NGOs, 15 Sept. 2016 available at [<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=19002&lang=en>]

² See, e.g. the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Egypt steps up travel bans on rights defenders with "chilling effect", UN expert warns, 24 November 2016, available at [<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20924&LangID=E#sthash.IX9ayaop.dpuf>]

³ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Zaree denies charges of harming national security and appeals the investigative judge's appointment in case no. 173/2011, 24 May 2016 available at [<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=19938&lang=en>]

⁴ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Zaree denies charges of harming national security and appeals the investigative judge's appointment in case no. 173/2011, 24 May 2016 available at [<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=19938&lang=en>]

⁵ Ibid.