

22 February 2019

Renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism

Our organizations are deeply concerned about reported moves to allow Egypt a role in the Human Rights Council resolution to renew the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (SR on CT). We fear that such a move would undermine the integrity and credibility of this vital mandate.

Egypt has an appalling record when it comes to abusing counter-terrorism measures to suppress civil society and dissenting voices. The Special Rapporteur has announced that the theme of her report to the 40th session is the misuse of counterterrorism measures against civil society and human rights defenders, and the session will thus be an important opportunity to shine a spotlight on Egypt's record in this regard.

In mid-January 2019, on the launch of its [annual World Report](#), Human Rights Watch [stated](#) that:

“Using counterterrorism as a guise to crush all forms of dissent could be Egypt’s hallmark of 2018... There’s simply not much room left to peacefully challenge the government without being detained and unfairly prosecuted as a ‘terrorist.’”

The Egyptian authorities' approach to counter-terrorism relies on systematic and widespread use of prolonged [arbitrary detentions](#), [enforced disappearances](#), and [torture and ill-treatment including by rape](#), in addition to scores of possible cases of [extrajudicial executions](#) of detainees, and [hundreds of unlawful killings of peaceful protesters](#). Many of these violations may amount to [crimes against humanity](#). In North Sinai, the army has razed thousands of homes and farmlands leading to the [forced evictions](#) of tens of thousands of residents, many of whom were offered no compensation or temporary housing. The army may have also been involved in unlawful ground and airstrikes including by using [cluster munitions](#). Further, the government has recently granted [impunity](#) to officers through special laws that make it even harder to question security officers involved in abuses.

We furthermore consider it wholly inappropriate for a State recently accused of severe reprisals following the visit of another Special Rapporteur in September/October 2018 to be rewarded with joining the core group on this vital mandate. The severity of these reprisals led in December 2018 to [a joint statement](#) from the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and the Special Rapporteur on Right to Housing warning that Egypt is “not ready to host further visits”.

Despite its rhetoric, the Egyptian government's approach is not primarily to give greater consideration to the human rights of victims of terrorism, which is a topic that had

already been addressed in more detail in the previous Mexican thematic resolution and previous reports of the mandate. Rather, it aims to divert attention from the adverse human rights effects of its and other States' counter-terrorism measures against individuals and the activities of civil society, including by effectively presenting the State itself as a victim.

Any Egyptian involvement in the mandate renewal would be qualitatively different and far more damaging than the role it was accorded in the March 2018 thematic resolution. The March 2018 agreement was said at the time to be entirely without prejudice to the mandate resolution, and this was indeed offered to civil society and others at that time as a reassurance in the face of similar concerns.

Any dilution of the focus of the mandate, in the short or long term would also significantly narrow the [already highly restricted space](#) for independent oversight of counter-terrorism measures from a human rights perspective within the overall UN system. The mandate holds a uniquely important role in the UN Counter-Terrorism architecture, participating as the only UN entity with the exclusive mandate to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism.

Further, allowing Egypt to jointly lead the mandate renewal would only serve to encourage a continuation of its pattern of violations and abuses against civil society and others within Egypt, while shielding it from outside scrutiny.

We therefore urge you to communicate to the Permanent Missions of Mexico and Egypt your opposition to any such developments in relation to the leadership or content of the resolution to renew the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International
Article 19
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
FIDH
Human Rights Watch
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
Privacy International