

## **Plenary Speech Tuesday 03/10/2017 - EGYPT**

Thank you High Representative,

In the context of the EU-Egypt Partnership, we are now discussing the joint priorities for 2020, in light of the European Neighbourhood Policy review.

Even though I am deeply convinced of the strategic importance of Egypt's role in the Mediterranean arena, I consider it worthwhile stating that the basis for any bilateral dialogue should be a clear commitment to the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as set out in the preamble to the Association Agreement

We cannot discuss economic cooperation, trade, investment, or even migration and terrorism, while Egypt continues to pursue a repressive human rights policy.

“I find unacceptable the numerous occurrences of forced disappearances and torture conducted by the Egyptian authorities, which have increased in recent years. Among these, worthy of attention is the case of Ibrahim Metawly, a prominent lawyer arrested at Cairo airport on his way to Geneva to address the UN Human Rights Council. He is being detained in isolation, under inhumane conditions, with no access to his lawyer or his family.”

Furthermore, two of his colleagues, Dr. Ahmad Amasha and Mr. Hanan Badr el-Din of the Association of the Families of the Enforced-Disappeared were arrested months ago and remain in prison to this day. This unacceptable crackdown on civil society organisation and individuals must stop.

The EU has the moral responsibility to stand beside those who speak out for the disappeared in Egypt and to support those who fight for justice and human rights. The EU must insist with its official interlocutors in Cairo to release human rights defenders detained on political grounds.

We call on you High Representative Mogherini to take the lead in this regard and to make sure that our foreign policy remains credible and consistent.