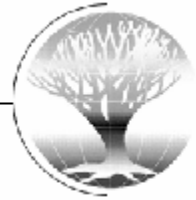


الشبكة الأوروبية المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network



8 June 2006

EMHRN

EU-Egypt Association Council

The Egyptian Government escalates campaign against reform advocates

In view of the EU-Egypt Association Council on 13th June and the current negotiations of an Action Plan in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) expresses its deep concern due to the recent security and punitive campaign against reform advocates in Egypt. It considers this campaign evidence of the lack of political will on the part of the Egyptian government to reform, and of its attempts to restrict opportunities for peaceful opposition and civil society to grow. This campaign also demonstrates the expansion in the use of the emergency law to impose more restrictions on freedoms of expression and thought, and on the right to peaceful assembly, since demonstrators were arrested under the emergency law, despite assertions that the goal of extending emergency status is for fighting terrorism.

It is worth mentioning that the last few weeks have witnessed an escalation in arbitrary detentions of hundreds of political activists. Most of those arrested are members in the Kefaya Movement, the Muslim Brotherhood Group, and the Al-Ghad Party. They were arrested for demonstrating peacefully, expressing solidarity with reformist judges in their struggle for independence of the judiciary. According to testimonies from Egyptian human rights organisations, some of those arrested were subjected to torture and ill treatment. It was also alleged that one of Kefaya movement members was subjected to sexual harassment.

The authorities charged those who were arrested, of spreading rumours that disturb the public security, insulting the President of the Republic, participating in assemblies that exceed five persons in violation of the emergency law, and occupying streets which interrupted traffic. Egyptian security personnel employed violence against peaceful assemblies, even against judges and local and foreign journalists.

The Egyptian government has escalated its confrontation with reformist judges as it prosecuted two judges, Hisham Bastawisi and Mahmoud Makki in disciplinary court, penalizing them for demanding judiciary independence and investigating the violence and fraud that plagued the last parliamentary elections. The disciplinary court issued a rebuke to Mr. Bastawisi but exonerated Mr. Makki.

In addition, the Court of Cassation confirmed on May 19 2006 the five year jail sentence issued against the former candidate in presidential elections, Ayman Nour, for the charge of forgery of the Al-Ghad party's documents. This trial was tainted with many irregularities and did not adhere to fair trial standards, giving the appearance of a political trial.

The EMHRN demands that the Egyptian government immediately and unconditionally release all the detainees who were arrested in connection to the latest incidents and compensate them for all physical and emotional damages. It asks the Egyptian government to end the policy of impunity; to persecute those responsible for practicing torture and violence against demonstrators regardless of their positions in the government; to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of thought without interference from security apparatus; and ending the use of emergency law to suppress freedom of expression. The EMHRN also affirms its support for the demands of the Judges Club to enact a law that guarantees independence to the judiciary and conforms to international standards.

The EMHRN welcomes the EU Declaration of the 15th May on Measures by Egyptian Authorities Against Civil Society Activists and calls on the European Union to ask at the Association Council the Egyptian government to respect its regional and international commitments with regard to human rights, and to demonstrate its genuine will to pursue political reform; to improve the human rights situation; to facilitate the mission of civil society in the monitoring the implementation of association agreements and the Action Plan between Egypt and the EU within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy as is it expected to be approved soon.

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