

## Texts adopted

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**Egypt: recent  
developments**

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B7-0079, 0082, 0084, 0085 and 0087/2012

### ► **European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2012 on Egypt: recent developments (2012/2541(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular that of 17 November 2011 on Egypt, in particular the case of blogger Alaa Abd El-Fattah<sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966, to which Egypt is a party,
- having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Catherine Ashton, of 2 February 2012 on the football stadium tragedy in Egypt and of 1 February 2012 on the continued crackdown on civil society in Egypt,
- having regard to the EU-Egypt Association Agreement of 2004 and the Action Plan agreed in 2007,
- having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 10 October 2011 and the European Council conclusions of 23 October 2011 on Egypt,
- having regard to the Joint Communication from the Commission and the VP/HR to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 25 May 2011 on a new response to a changing Neighbourhood,
- having regard to the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) since 2004, and in particular to the Commission's progress reports on its implementation,
- having regard to the Joint Communication from the Commission and the VP/HR to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of 2004, as updated in 2008,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the situation of NGOs in Egypt is alarming; whereas the establishment of a committee to review civil institutions and NGOs, with the aim of tightening legal control over foreign funding of civil society organisations and political foundations, was announced in October 2011 and a request was subsequently made to the Central Bank to monitor all bank transfers to and from NGOs; whereas the offices of 10 foreign-funded organisations were searched and those organisations were investigated and then banned by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) on 29 December 2011; whereas on 5 February 2012 Egypt's military-led government announced that it was putting 19 American citizens and 24 others on trial as part of a criminal investigation into the foreign financing of non-profit-making organisations active in Egypt; whereas Egyptian judges are investigating alleged illegal foreign financing of pro-democracy NGOs and political foundations, and whereas 44 defendants, including 19 Americans, 14 Egyptians, five Serbs, two Germans, two Lebanese, one Jordanian and one Palestinian, have had their cases referred to the Cairo Criminal Court and ordered not to leave the country;

B. whereas the NGOs also stand accused of establishing and running offices in Egypt without government authorisation, even though applications for registration made by the organisations in accordance with the relevant rules have not been acted on by the Egyptian authorities for over five years; whereas these charges are the culmination of an escalating legal crackdown on national and international NGOs in Egypt, an approach which is at odds with international human rights law and is undermining efforts to promote democratic values and

safeguard human rights;

C. whereas at least 74 people were killed and hundreds more were injured after clashes broke out at a football match in Port Said between Cairo club Al Ahly and local club Al Masr;

D. whereas the police's response to the clashes was astonishingly passive; whereas anger and speculation that the clashes may have been politically motivated, in connection with demands for an end to military rule, led to street demonstrations protesting against any type of dictatorship, military or other, in the days following the football stadium tragedy, resulting in further deaths and injuries; whereas the police are continuing to fire tear gas, birdshot and rubber bullets at protestors;

E. whereas Egypt's Deputy Health Minister Hesham Sheiha called the stadium tragedy the biggest disaster in Egypt's football history; whereas the SCAF ordered helicopters to ferry injured team members and fans of the visiting side to a military hospital; whereas, in particular at times of transition and social unrest, sport should play a unifying role, offering a sense of normality and initiating reconciliation between divided communities;

F. whereas the success of the ENP, and of the reforms in the area of human rights, and more specifically women's rights, is contingent on the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the relevant policies;

G. whereas the SCAF has followed a controversial agenda, as the emergency law has not been fully abolished and can still be applied in connection with cases of 'thuggery', a concept which is open to wide interpretation and arbitrary application; whereas, according to international and national organisations, there has been no improvement in human rights protection in Egypt throughout the past 10 months of military rule; whereas civilians continue to be tried before military tribunals, and bloggers, journalists and human rights defenders are subjected to direct or indirect harassment, which has contributed to growing tensions and fuelled further popular protests; whereas the SCAF has failed to conduct investigations into reports of sexual assaults on female protestors, including so-called 'virginity' tests, death threats and other breaches of human rights;

H. whereas in the elections to the People's Assembly held between November 2011 and January 2012 the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party won 47 % of the votes and the Salafist-dominated Nour party 25 %, resulting in a fall in the number of women MPs from 64 to eight; whereas presidential elections are due to take place in June; whereas no international institutions, including the EU, were invited to observe the elections;

I. whereas it has repeatedly called for the lifting of the state of emergency, which has been in force since 1981, the strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Egypt; whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world;

1. Expresses its solidarity with the Egyptian people in this crucial period of democratic transition in the country; calls on the Egyptian authorities to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including women's rights, freedom of religion, conscience and thought, protection of minorities and non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, freedom of the press and media, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, due process and freedom of expression and speech, as these rights are essential components of deep democracy;

2. Calls for the criminal charges against the NGOs and political foundations to be dropped immediately; calls on the Egyptian authorities to ensure that any inspections of domestic or foreign civil society organisations are carried out on the basis of full transparency and impartiality, and in keeping with appropriate legal procedures and international standards in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms; considers that these tactics constitute a severe violation of the right to freedom of association, as provided for in Article 22 of the ICCPR; calls on the Egyptian authorities to adopt a new law on association based on international human rights standards, in close consultation with NGOs and human rights and pro-democracy groups; expresses its full support for the commitment shown and the important and high-quality work carried out by these organisations in support of civil society and the Egyptian people in order to promote peace, democracy and human rights;

3. Deplores the considerable loss of life and the high number of injuries in Port Said and extends its condolences to the victims' families; calls for an independent inquiry into the events leading to the tragedy and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

4. Is concerned at accusations that the clashes were politically motivated, and calls on the Egyptian authorities urgently to initiate an independent investigation of the events of 1 February 2012;

5. Expresses its strong support for reforms leading to the establishment of democracy, the rule of law and social

justice in Egypt, in keeping with the will of the Egyptian people; reiterates its call for the total lifting of the state of emergency; stresses once again the importance of good governance, the fight against corruption, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Egypt, calls for clarifications concerning the constitutional process, its timeline and its principles, so as to ensure that any constitutional provision is inclusive and leaves no possibility for discrimination against anyone in Egyptian society; stresses once again the need for supreme power to be transferred to a democratically-elected civilian government as soon as possible;

6. Stresses the importance of holding free, fair and transparent elections, and encourages the EU and its Member States to continue supporting and assisting the Egyptian authorities, political parties and civil society in their efforts to achieve this goal; calls on the SCAF to allow independent observers to witness and monitor the forthcoming presidential elections; calls on the VP/HR to promote the setting-up of a task force involving the European Parliament to support the democratic transition process, in keeping with the call made by those working for democratic change, in particular as regards the holding of free and democratic elections and institution-building, including the development of an independent judiciary;

7. Welcomes the release of the imprisoned bloggers Alaa Abd El-Fattah and Maikel Nabil Sanad; reiterates its call to the Egyptian authorities to guarantee that no blogger, journalist or human rights defender will be subject to direct or indirect harassment or intimidation in the country; welcomes the release of political prisoners, yet reiterates that they should not have been tried by military courts in the first place; believes that the prisoners in question should therefore have been acquitted instead of pardoned;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Egyptian authorities.

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**(1) Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0518.**