



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

15.7.2014

B8-0008/2014

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on freedom of expression and assembly in Egypt
(2014/2728(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0008/2014

European Parliament resolution on freedom of expression and assembly in Egypt (2014/2728(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Joint Statement on Egypt of 27 Member States of the United Nations Human Rights Council of 7 March 2014;
- having regard to the statements by the Spokesperson of EU HR/VP following her visit to Egypt of 11 April 2014 and of the EU HR/VP on the death sentences against 529 members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt of 25 March 2014;
 - having regard to the EU HR/VP Statement on the court rulings in Egypt of 29 April 2014;
 - having regard to the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) in Egypt Preliminary Statement of 29 May 2014 and to the Declaration on behalf of the European Union on the presidential elections in Egypt of 5 June 2014;
 - having regard to Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights- Having regard to the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995,
 - having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human rights of 1950,
 - having regard to the new Egyptian Constitution adopted by referendum on the 15 January 2014,
 - having regard to the Amnesty International report published ahead of the third anniversary of the “25 January Revolution”,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt;
 - having regard to the Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas presidential elections were held in Egypt between 26-28 May 2014; whereas these elections took place in a context where space for freedom of expression has been severely restricted, and all forms of dissent and criticism, including those of human rights organisation, have been stifled;

- B. Whereas 20 people identified by the authorities as Al-Jazeera journalists, including four foreign journalists, have been prosecuted on charges of attacking national unity and social peace, spreading false reports and membership of a terrorist organization; whereas on 23 June 2014, 18 of these journalists were convicted to harsh multi-year prison sentences by a Cairo Court; following a trial that fell short of international standards;
- C. Whereas respect for media freedom has declined considerably since the Egyptian Army seized power and whereas, according to Reporters without Borders, at least 65 journalists have been arrested and 17 are still in detention;
- D. Whereas there is extreme polarization of the Egyptian media into pro and anti-Morsi factions, which is reinforcing the polarization of Egyptian society;
- E. Whereas on 21 June 2014, a Criminal Court in Minya upheld death sentences in connection with events in the city last August against Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohamed Al-Badie and 182 other supporters of former elected President Mohamed Morsi; whereas the defendants, whose charges range from threatening public order and setting fire to a police station to murder, were among 683 people provisionally sentenced to death on 28 April;
- F. Whereas since the revolution of January 2011 that toppled Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian judges have frequently imposed harsh and controversial punishments against political dissidents;
- G. Whereas Egypt has witnessed a series of damaging blows to human rights and violence on an over the last seven months, with security forces committing human rights violations, routinely using excessive force against opposition protesters in the streets and at demonstrations on university campuses;
- H. Whereas the passing of the Law 107 on the Right to Public Meetings, Processions and Peaceful Demonstrations (Protest Law) in November 2013, placing restrictions on public gatherings and demonstrations, and granting security forces license to use excessive force against protesters , poses a grave threat to freedom of assembly;
- I. Whereas the Egyptian authorities have tightened the noose on freedom of expression and assembly under the repressive legislation introduced, making it easier for the government to silence its critics and crack down on protests; whereas hundreds of students have also been arrested during protests and clashes;

- J. Whereas Government officials have acknowledged that authorities have detained at least 16,000 individuals, including 1,000 protesters since January 2014 and many of those detained were rounded up solely for exercising their rights to free assembly, association, and expression, or for their alleged affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood;
- K. Whereas on 11 June 2014, the South Cairo Criminal Court sentenced 25 people, including prominent blogger and activist Alaa Abdel-Fatah, to 15 years in prison and heavy fines for participating in a demonstration in front of Egypt's upper house of parliament in November 2013;
- L. Whereas on 21 June 2014 the police dispersed, by using tear gas, a peaceful march organized in the Heliopolis neighborhood in Cairo to demand the repeal of the Protest Law, as well as the release of those detained on the basis of this law; whereas on 29 June 2014, the trial of 23 activists - among which Ms. Yara Sallam and Ms Sana Seif-arrested in this context has started;
1. Reminds that the newly adopted Egyptian constitution opened a way for building a country that respects freedom, democracy and makes rights and justice a way of work and life;
 2. Is extremely concerned about the increasingly severe clampdown and physical attacks on media in Egypt, which is hampering their ability to operate freely;
 3. Urges the Egyptian Authorities to respect the new Constitution, which guarantees media freedom;
 4. Regrets the sentences pronounced against the Al Jazeera journalists, and those pronounced in absentia against a number of European journalists;
 5. Urges the Egyptian authorities to promptly release all journalists imprisoned for carrying out legitimate news reporting activities in exercise of their fundamental human rights, considering the State's obligation to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is respected, and that journalists are able to report on diverse views and issues surrounding the current situation in Egypt;
 6. Regrets that the result of the new protest law is a charter for state-sanctioned repression and "carte blanche" for security force abuses, with the consequence of attacks on

journalists and media freedom as well as raids and attempts to place further restrictions on non-governmental organizations;

7. Deplores there is a concerted effort underway to squeeze out any independent observers, from activists, to journalists to non-governmental organizations as a deliberate attempt to make it more difficult for them to operate in Egypt and continue their work documenting and reporting on abuses;
8. Considers the Egyptian protest law, which allows the Egyptian authorities to ban demonstrations at their discretion and gives security forces a free rein to use force, including firearms, against protesters, to be in violation of international law;
9. Calls on the authorities to ensure peaceful protest, notably by amending the protest law;
10. Expresses its deep concern about the detainees' conditions and ill-treatment of the activists arrested when demonstrating against the repressive Protest Law in the Heliopolis neighbourhood in Cairo, including beatings by police during the arrest and later at the police station; calls for their immediate release since their detention seems only aimed at curtailing their human rights activities;
11. Is deeply concerned that the Egyptian Courts have become instrumental in the arbitrary and politically motivated prosecutions by the State, which may also be discriminatory;
12. Urges the Egyptian authorities to ensure independent and credible investigations and to respect the right for fair and timely trials based on clear charges and to ensure the respect of the defendants' rights ;
13. Expresses its deep concern regarding the death sentences pronounced by the Court in Minya after a trial that severely violated the defendants' due process rights; reiterates its firm opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances; calls on the authorities to review the numerous death sentences imposed on political opponents in mass trials and to respect due process;
14. Regrets that, despite a new law on sexual harassment, violence against women has been worsening especially in the public sphere, with dozens of cases of rape and sexual violence during protests; strongly invites the Egyptian Government to adopt national strategies for combating violence against women and eliminating all forms of

discrimination, ensuring the effective consultation and involvement of women's rights groups and other civil society organizations throughout the process;

15. Urges the Egyptian Authorities to change course and take concrete steps to ensure that the provisions of the new Constitution on fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly, are fully implemented, showing they respect human rights and the rule of law, starting with the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience,
16. Urges the Egyptian government to put an end to political harassment and arbitrary detention, including by dropping charges against and releasing all those detained solely for the exercise of their rights to free expression, association, and assembly, cease ongoing arrests and prosecution of demonstrators solely for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and assembly under the pretext of violating the assembly law and/or other legislations and stop detaining persons without charge or trial for expressing their opinion;
17. Reminds the Egyptian Authorities of their national and international legal obligations, and calls upon the new president and government to prioritise the protection and promotion of human rights and ensure accountability for violations of human rights, including through an independent and impartial administration of justice;
18. Reminds the Egyptian Government that the long term success of Egypt and its people depends on the protection of universal human rights and on the establishment and anchorage of democratic and transparent institutions also engaged in protecting citizens' fundamental rights; therefore, calls on the Egyptian authorities to fully implement the principles of the International Conventions;
19. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission to keep this topic with high priority on the agenda of political dialogue with Egypt;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative/Vice-President, the Council and the Commission, to the Governments and the Parliaments of the Member States, to the Egyptian Government, to the Egyptian Parliament, to the UN Secretary General and the UN Human Rights Council.