



Plenary sitting

B8-0338/2016

8.3.2016

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 Egypt, notably the case of Giulio Regeni
(2016/2608(RSP))

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European Parliament resolution on Egypt, notably the case of Giulio Regeni (2016/2608(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular of 15 December and 15 January 2015,
- having regard to the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Egypt of August 2013 and February 2014,
- having regard to the EU-Egypt Association Agreement,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, on Torture, Freedom of Expression and on Human Rights Defenders,
- having regard to the reply by the High Representative/Vice President to an MEP written question on EU and Member States' military support to Egypt, dated 27 October 2015,
- having regard to the Constitution of Egypt, notably article 52 (on torture) and 93 (the binding character of international human rights law)
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture to which Egypt is a party,
- having regard to an open letter signed by more than 4,600 academics from around the world, demanding an investigation into the violent death of Giulio Regeni and into the growing number of forced disappearances in Egypt;
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas according to information available, Giulio Regeni, a 28-year old Italian doctoral student at Cambridge University, disappeared on 25 January 2016 after having left his home in Cairo; whereas his body was found on 2nd February next to a road in the outskirts of Cairo;

B. Whereas Egyptian authorities ordered a post-mortem examination before repatriating his body to Italy, where Italian investigators performed their own post-mortem; whereas the results are yet to be made public; whereas the Egyptian authorities have assured that they have nothing to conceal regarding this murder, that they are equally interested in seeking the truth and that they are ready to fully cooperate with their Italian counterparts in the ongoing investigation;

C. Whereas according to media reports and to the Italian ambassador to Cairo, Mr Regeni's body was found to have been subjected to severe beating and multiple forms of torture; whereas the Italian Interior Minister said that the body showed signs of “something inhuman, animal-like, an unacceptable violence”; whereas the Egyptian Assistant Justice Minister for Forensic Medicine Affairs rejected a media report claiming that a senior coroner

had testified that Giulio Regini had been tortured systematically for up to seven days;

D. Whereas the area where Mr Regini's body was found, has heavy security presence and checkpoints; whereas several observers reported on the intense police activity ahead of the fifth anniversary of the revolution; whereas the Italian police was reported to have a credible witness who saw Mr Regini stopped by plain-clothes security officers on the evening of his disappearance; whereas several Italian media and other observers suspect the involvement of Egyptian intelligence or security services; whereas the Egyptian Foreign Minister said claims of such involvement were merely "judgments, accusations and insinuations, unjustified and without proof";

E. Whereas Mr Regini was conducting a research in Cairo on the development of independent trade unions in Egypt; whereas some 1,000 foreign researchers reside in Egypt, affiliated with private and government universities;

F. Whereas the case of Giulio Regini follows a long list of enforced disappearances that have occurred in Egypt since the military coup of July 2013; whereas in 2015, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom reported the disappearance of 1,700 persons at the hands of the state security forces; whereas these practices occur in a climate of near-total impunity; whereas in summer 2015, the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances reported it had referred the cases of 66 people to the Egyptian authorities for urgent action;

G. Whereas the current Egyptian government has conducted a large-scale campaign of arbitrary detention of government critics, including journalists, human rights defenders, as well as members of the Muslim Brotherhood; whereas since July 2013, more than 22,000 people have been detained according to the Egyptian authorities;

H. Whereas the nature of the ongoing domestic repression and the number of prisoners of conscience, political prisoners and journalists detained in Egypt is unparalleled since the 1970s;

I. Whereas Ibrahim Halawa, 19 years old, Irish national and Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, is potentially facing a death sentence in a mass trial of 494 defendants for his participation in protests in central Cairo in August 2013; whereas his trial has been postponed 12 times so far; whereas there has been no tangible progress since the European Parliament adopted an urgency resolution on his case;

J. Whereas according to the NGO Reprieve, 600 people were sentenced to death in 2014, including some 72% of sentences handed down for attending pro-democracy protests; whereas at least 15 mass trials have taken place since March 2014, which have seen hundreds of death sentences handed down at a time;

K. Whereas the EU is Egypt's first economic partner and its main source of foreign investment; whereas in line with its revised European Neighbourhood Policy after the so-called Arab Spring and notably the "more for more" approach, the level and scope of the EU's engagement with Egypt is to be dependent on progress with regard to the country's respect of its commitments on democracy, rule of law and human rights; whereas on 21 August 2013 the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) tasked the High Representative to review EU assistance to Egypt; whereas the Council decided that the EU's cooperation with Egypt would be readjusted according to developments on the ground;

L. Whereas the EU FAC conclusions of 21 August 2013 stated that, "Member States also agreed to suspend export licenses to Egypt of any equipment which might be used for internal repression and to reassess export licenses of equipment covered by Common Position 2008/944/CFSP and review their security assistance with Egypt"; whereas these conclusions were reiterated by the FAC in February 2014; whereas the HR/VP confirmed in a written reply dated 27 October 2015 that these conclusions constituted "a political commitment against any military support to Egypt";

1. Expresses its outrage at the recent abduction and the savage torture and killing of Italian researcher Giulio Regini and expresses its profound solidarity with the relatives of the victim;

2. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to carry out a swift, independent, impartial and effective investigation into the case of Mr Regini; insists that the Egyptian authorities identify and prosecute those responsible for this odious crime; takes note in this regard of the statement of the Egyptian authorities that Cairo will fully investigate and cooperate with the Italian government on this case;

3. Underscores with grave concern that the case of Giulio Regini is not an isolated accident, but it is placed within a context of a dramatic increase in reports of torture in police detention stations and other cases of death in custody and enforced disappearances across Egypt under the current leadership;

4. Considers that the murder of Mr Regini, set against a backdrop of growing suspicion around foreign visitors, sends a chilling message to all those in Europe and beyond who are seeking to build ties with Egyptian society and to promote a greater understanding of the country;

5. Remains deeply concerned by the overall human rights situation in Egypt, notably the generalized crackdown against civil society organisations, the continued police and military brutality, the harassment, the mass arrests, systematic torture and abuse in places of detention and the sham criminal proceedings against hundreds of individuals, from all political backgrounds, solely as a response to their peaceful exercise of their fundamental freedoms or their expression of dissent; calls on the Egyptian authorities to strictly uphold the unequivocal constitutional guarantees in relation to these freedoms;

6. Calls, once again, for the immediate and unconditional release of all persons detained and sentenced solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including human rights defenders Mahinour el Masry, Aya Hegazy, Mahmoud Hussein, Ahmad Abd el Rahman and Ahmed Said; calls for the immediate release of human rights activist Alaa Abd El Fattah; calls on the authorities to annul the baseless ban against the April 6 Movement and the sentences against its members, including Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel;

7. Denounces the imposition of arbitrary travel bans to intimidate, harass and restrict the work of human rights defenders as well as journalists and lawyers in Egypt; calls on the Egyptian authorities to withdraw the travel bans imposed on a number of Egypt's leading human rights defenders, including Hossam Baghat, Esraa Abdel Fattah, Nasser Amin, Omar Hazeq, Mohamed Lotfy, Gamal Eid, Hossameldin Ali, Ahmed Ghonim and Bassem Samir;

8. Calls on Egypt's recently established People's Assembly to repeal urgently the repressive Protest Law of November 2013, which has been used to clamp down on all forms of peaceful dissent, as well as the 1914 Assembly Law; also calls for the repeal of all other repressive legislation adopted in violation of the Egypt's Constitution, including the Law on Terrorist Acts and the Law on Terrorist Entities, which is used by the regime for internal repression rather than to improve collective security, as well as the Law on Associations;
9. Expresses its profound preoccupation with the severe deterioration of the media environment; calls for the immediate and unconditional release and the overturn of wrongful convictions of all media professionals and bloggers arrested or convicted for merely carrying out their legitimate activities, including Mahmoud Abdel Nabi, Mahmoud Abu Zeid (a.k.a. Shawkan), Samhi Mustafa, Ahmed Fouad, Abdel Rahman Shaheen, Youssef Shaaban, Hisham Gaafar, Esraa Al Taweel and Ismail al-Iskandrani, as well as novelist Ahmed Naji;
10. Reiterates its deep concern about the continued, arbitrary detention of Irish citizen Ibrahim Halawa in Egypt and calls, once again, for his immediate release; calls on the EEAS to closely monitor his trial and to report back, as well as to urge the Egyptian authorities to transfer his case to Egypt's juvenile justice circuit, in compliance with domestic Egyptian and binding international law;
11. Recalls its absolute abhorrence of the handing down of mass death sentences against alleged supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, after shockingly unfair trials;
12. Expresses concern about the prevalence of torture in detention centres in Egypt; calls on the Egyptian authorities to prosecute all security officers involved in criminal practices related to torture and enforced disappearances, and to allow Egyptian and international rights organizations and the ICRC full access to all places of detention and to all prisoners held there; is deeply worried by hunger strikes taking place in Egyptian prisons, such as the Aqrab prison;
13. Deeply deplores the imminent threat of forced closure of the El Nadim Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture; calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the order of administrative closure, as it appears to be only aimed at sanctioning its legitimate human rights work;
14. Stresses that the continued, high level of repression in Egypt proscribes any "business as usual" approach by the EU and instead warrants a profound and comprehensive review of its relations with Egypt; calls for the swift adoption of Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, which should contain effective and targeted measures in response to the situation in the country; opposes any new initiative in the EU's engagement with Egyptian authorities prior to this policy review process and to tangible progress with regards to the human rights situation;
15. Considers that the murder of Giulio Regini should be wake-up call to the EEAS and the EU Member States to cease their short-sighted and delusive approach to Egypt's security forces as a guarantor of stability and a partner to fight violent extremism and terrorism in the region;
16. Calls for the suspension of any form of security cooperation and assistance with Egyptian authorities, as long as its security apparatus continues to fuel radicalism and violent extremism through its systematic violations committed in full-impunity;

17. Deplores the continued security cooperation and arms deals by EU Member States, notably France, Germany and the United Kingdom, with Egypt, which run counter to the EU Common Position on Arms exports; calls for an EU-wide ban on export of any form of security equipment and military aid to Egypt;

18. Calls on the High Representative to report on the current state of military and security cooperation by EU Member States with the Egyptian regime, and on the results of the review by Member States of their security assistance with Egypt, as decided by the Foreign Affairs Council in August 2013;

19. Remains dismayed by the demure public reaction of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the EU Member States to the systematic crack-down on the entire Egyptian human rights movement, which falls short of the EU's commitments, notably under the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders; expects the EU, notably the HR/VP and the EU Delegation in Cairo, to step up its public response to further assaults by the Egyptian regime against human rights defenders and other voices of dissent, to ensure regular exchanges with them, to support those at risk or in detention and to monitor their trials in a comprehensive manner; stresses that prison visits are a critical tool at the disposal of the EU for carrying out its human rights policy, as laid out in the various EU thematic guidelines on human rights;

20. Expresses particular concern about reports of an ongoing investigation against 37 national Egyptian organisations in relation to foreign funding, as well as against foreign foundations; expects the EEAS to develop urgently a strategy in relation to this case, which threatens among the most prominent civil society actors in the country;

21. Calls on the EEAS and Member States to raise with the Egyptian authorities the routine practice of enforced disappearances and torture, notably by agents of the National Security Agency, and to press for impartial and independent investigation into all cases of torture and death in detention as well as for an effective reform of the security apparatus and the judiciary;

22. Calls on the EU to adopt a list of Egyptian prisoners of conscience, whose fate will serve as factual elements against which to determine the future of EU-Egypt relations;

23. 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 parliaments and governments of the Member States, the President and Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights.