



Plenary sitting

B8-0576/2018

11.12.2018

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 situation of Human Rights Defenders
(2018/2968(RSP))

Rolandas Paksas, Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo
on behalf of the EFDD Group

**European Parliament resolution on Egypt, notably the situation of Human Rights Defenders
(2018/2968(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- Having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular those of 17 July 2014, of 15 January 2015, of 16 December 2015, and of 10 March 2016;
- Having regard to the EU-Egypt Association Agreement of 2001, which entered into force in 2004, strengthened by the Action Plan of 2007; having regard also to the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017-2020, adopted on 25 July 2017, and to the joint statement issued following the EU-Egypt Association Council,
- Having regard to the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Egypt of August 2013 and February 2014,
- Having regard to the new EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights,
- Having regard to the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities for 2017-20, “*guided by a shared commitment to the universal values of democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights*”, and affirming that “*Egypt and the EU are committed to promoting democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights as constitutional rights of all their citizens, in line with their international obligations*”,
- Having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, which define human rights defenders (HRDs) as of the major priorities of the EU's external human rights policy;
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, on Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression and on Human Rights Defenders;
- Having regard to the EU Position at the 25 July 2017 EU-Egypt Association Council Meeting, stating “*The EU is concerned about the progressive restriction of space for civil society in Egypt and the pressure put on human rights organisations and defenders, including through arrests, asset freezes, travel bans, electronic surveillance and court summons.*”;
- Having regard to the expected 8th meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council on 20 December 2018, in the absence of any published report on the situation of human rights in Egypt or on EU-Egypt relations since the 7th meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council of 25 July 2017;
- Having regard to the 30 May 2018 EEAS Spokesperson Statement “*The increasing number of arrests of human rights defenders, political activists and bloggers in the latest weeks in Egypt is therefore a worrying development. In a moment when Egypt is seeking to consolidate democracy and the rule of law, the respect for peaceful expression of*

opinion and of criticism is important. Those standing for fundamental rights and democracy should not be fearing reprisals”;

- having regard to the reports by the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on the increasing number of enforced disappearance in 2016, 2017, and 2018;
 - having regard to the Constitution of Egypt, notably articles 52 (prohibition of torture in all forms and types.), 73 (on freedom of assembly) and 93 (binding character of international human rights law);
 - having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;
 - 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 Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure
- A. Whereas almost three years have passed since the body of Giulio Regeni was found, on 3 February 2016, close to the Egyptian National Security Structure,
- B. Whereas the Egyptian authorities released in January 2017 a video registration of Giulio Regeni and thereby confirming he was being followed by the Egyptian security apparatus prior to his disappearance, torture and death;
- C. Whereas the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi had continuously promised maximum cooperation of the Egyptian Authorities without concrete progress in the investigation but the Egyptian authorities still refuse *de facto* to cooperate to bring all the perpetrators to justice and to reveal the truth regarding his death and the barbaric forms of torture suffered by Regeni;
- D. Whereas five Egyptian citizens lost their lives in 24 March 2016 at the hand of the Egyptian security forces who claimed they were responsible for Giulio’s death to later admit they might have not;
- E. Whereas Italy had recalled its ambassador to Egypt in April 2016 in protest at the lack of progress in the investigation by Egyptian authorities into the torture and murder of Giulio Regeni;
- F. Whereas the legal consultant of Giulio Regeni’s family had been arrested in Egypt in April 2016 and released after the Egyptian General Attorney Nabil Sadek's visit to Italy in September 2016;
- G. Whereas human rights lawyer Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, co-founder of the League of Families of the Disappeared, who had given legal advice to the Giulio Regeni legal team, was also subjected to enforced disappearance on September 10, 2017 while travelling to Geneva to participate in a session of the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearance, allegedly tortured, then ordered into arbitrary preventive detention by

State Security Prosecution in maximum-security Scorpion wing of Tora prison, where he remains in solitary confinement;

- H. Whereas the Italian prosecutors have included five officials of the Egyptian security apparatus as suspects for the kidnap, torture and killing of the European citizen Giulio Regeni;
- I. Whereas the Italian Chamber of Deputies has severed its diplomatic ties with the Egyptian counterpart, until Egypt takes concrete steps to shed the truth on Giulio Regeni's case;
- J. Whereas the case of Giulio Regeni follows a long list of forced disappearances occurring in Egypt since the military takeover in July 2013 as highlighted by the UN working group on enforced disappearance;
- K. Whereas the crackdown on Egyptian civil society, human rights defenders and activists has clearly escalated in 2018, with waves of arbitrary detentions and politically-based prosecution of human rights defenders, media workers, and peaceful rights and democracy activists, in particular through State Security Cases no. 441/2018 and 621/2018 targeting HRDs, artists, media workers and activists;
- L. Whereas many of those thus arrested have initially been forcibly disappeared, reappearing with these charges after a few days/weeks, whereas others remain disappeared;
- M. Whereas the most recent campaign of at least 40 human rights workers, lawyers, and political activists arrested, and some forcibly disappeared since late October 2018, particularly targeted many activists who provided humanitarian and legal support to families of political detainees;
- N. Whereas Egypt's 2015 Counter-terrorism Law uses a broad definition of terrorism that includes 'infringing the public order, endangering the safety, interests, or security of society, obstructing provisions of the constitution and law, or harming national unity, social peace, or national security', putting peaceful dissenters, pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders, at risk of being labelled a terrorist and being sentenced to death;
- O. Whereas Law 70/2017 Regulating the Work of Associations and Other Institutions Working in the Field of Civil Work (NGO Law) severely restricts the independent work of civil society in Egypt and threatens the very existence of a human rights community in Egypt, as highlighted by UN experts including the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

- P. Whereas President Abdelfattah al-Sisi recently recognized that law 70/2017 was drafted in a spirit of mistrust and suspicion against independent civil society organizations; whereas his call on the Parliament to reviewing the law is not deemed sufficient, being the law itself to be totally changed and redrafted in a different spirit;
- Q. Whereas prisoners and detainees continue to be held in cruel and inhuman prison conditions in Egypt; whereas dozens have died in detention, often due to prison authorities refusing to grant adequate medical attention; whereas these practices occur in a climate of near-total impunity; whereas long pre-trial detention, regularly renewed in excess of the two-year limit in Egypt, is also used as a frequent complementary punitive measure, including against HRDs, journalists and peaceful activists:
- R. Whereas Reporters Without Borders (RSF) had documented at least 38 media workers, including bloggers, in detention in Egypt for their work by late November 2018; whereas foreign media workers are also targeted, with several renowned media correspondents deported or denied entry into Egypt;
- S. Whereas international and Egyptian NGOs and human rights defenders have been subject to persistent judicial harassment through case 173/2011, also known as the foreign funding case;
- T. Whereas women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Egypt continue to face various forms of state-led harassment, notably in the form of defamatory campaigns and judicial prosecution;
- U. Whereas Egypt and the EU are bound by the legally binding treaty in the form of the Association Agreement which came into force in 2004; whereas the EU is Egypt's first economic partner and its main source of foreign investment; whereas the EU-Egypt Association Agreement preamble emphasizes the importance of the principles of the United Nations Charter, in particular the observance of human rights, democratic principles. Respect for human rights and democratic principles constitute an essential element of the Agreement; whereas the EU's engagement is intended to be dependent on progress regarding commitments on democracy, rule of law and human rights;
1. Reaffirms its continued outrage at the torture and brutal murder of the Italian researcher Giulio Regeni and expresses once again its solidarity and support to his family who continues to fight for the truth; reminds that Giulio Regeni was not only an Italian citizen, but an EU citizen as well;
 2. Notes the positive developments on Regeni's case on the Italian side, with the Italian Prosecutors' opening an investigation on 5 Egyptian officials suspected of being involved; laments that on the Egyptian side little progress has been made;
 3. Calls again on Egyptian authorities to fully cooperate in the investigations and to provide full access to documents and information related to the case; calls furthermore on Egyptian authorities to support Italian authorities request to interrogate the

witnesses and suspects involved in the murder of Giulio Regeni, as identified by Italian authorities;

4. Believes that in solidarity with the Italian Parliament, the EU should evaluate diplomatic measures to put pressure on the Egyptian authorities, including the suspension of diplomatic relations between the European Parliament and the Egyptian parliament until Egypt takes concrete steps on Regeni's Case;
5. Calls on the EU to raise this case once again in the upcoming EU-Egypt Association Council;
6. Expresses grave concern at the cases of enforced disappearance and torture of HRDs, journalists and rights activists in Egypt; calls on the Egyptian authorities to uphold their international human rights commitments and constitutional principles by effectively urging all security bodies to cease practices of torture and enforced disappearance, including against HRDs, activists and media workers, and inform families of the disappeared of their relatives' fate and location;
7. Expresses serious concern at the systematic infringement of fundamental human rights necessary to the meaningful exercise of democratic rights to political participation, namely freedom of expression, association, assembly and of the press in Egypt;
8. Denounces the successive escalations since 2017 in the repression and judicial harassment of Egyptian human rights defenders, activists and NGOs—including women human rights defenders and NGOs—as well as media workers, journalists and bloggers, and the closure of offices
9. Strongly urges Egypt to respect its commitment made in the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities adopted on 27 July 2017 to promote democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights in line with its Constitution and international standards, including by protecting human rights defenders, journalists, media workers and peaceful rights and democracy activists while they conduct their legitimate activities and exercise constitutionally-protected rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
10. Notes that civil society remains a priority in EU assistance to Egypt as an essential contributor to transparent, participatory governance and sustainable development processes in Egypt, in line with the August 2013 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions and the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities;
11. Urges the Egyptian authorities move to repeal the draconian NGO law no. 70/2017;
12. Urges Egypt to swiftly release all HRDs, media workers and peaceful activists in detention solely for their legitimate work or for exercising their rights
13. Is deeply concerned at the detention, judicial harassment, reprisals, and intimidation against workers and labor rights defenders, in violation of the right to freedom of association
14. Urges Egyptian's authorities to respond to every call for protection of the persecuted religious minorities, such as Christians of the Church of Copts, in the churches and their place of life and work.
15. calls on local authorities in Egypt to provide efficient material and social support for persecuted Christians with the immediate effect after every attempt of the right to live in their houses and to practice the faith in the churches;

16. calls for this support of the local government especially when it concern security protection for all family members but also medical, scholar and housing help of the authorities in the cases when the Egyptian Coptic Church families have fled their homes after the attack against them.
17. encourages all positives examples of the collaboration between local Ministry of Social Solidarity and Coptic Church and express the hope that the Human Rights activists working with Coptic Church will obtain the help and all needed protection of the Egyptian's authorities;
18. Calls on the EU and its Member States to take a clear, strong and unified position on Egypt in the upcoming sessions of the UN Human Rights Council and for as long as the country fails to show meaningful improvements in its human rights record; and calls on the EU Member States to address the serious restrictions on fundamental democratic freedoms and the reprisals against human rights defenders in their recommendations for the 2019 Universal Periodic Review of Egypt;
19. Calls on the European Commission and the External Action Service to apply article 2 of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement of 2001 stating that the provisions of the Agreement shall be based on respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and to reassess the implementation of the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities accordingly;
20. Opposes the disbursement of direct budget support funds for Egypt frozen following the 21 August 2013 [Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions](#) as it might risk potential complicity with human rights violations in the sectors to be funded;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Member States, and the Government and Parliament of Egypt.