



Plenary sitting

B9-0426/2020

15.12.2020

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 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) (2020/2912(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B9-0426/2020

European Parliament resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) (2020/2912(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular of 24 October 2019 and 13 December 2018,
 - 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 and the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017-2020,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, on Torture and Ill-treatment, Freedom of Expression and on Human Rights Defenders,
 - having regard to the Constitution of Egypt, notably its Articles 52 (on the prohibition of torture in all forms and types), 73 (on freedom of assembly) and 93 (on the binding character of international human rights law),
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all of which have been ratified by Egypt,
 - Having regard to the EU Common Position 2008/944/CFSP and the Arms Trade Treaty
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas in Egypt there has been an escalating crackdown against human rights defenders and their families, activists, civil society, journalists, lawyers and health workers, with continuous and widespread use of repressive practices and politically-motivated prosecution by the Egyptian authorities, including arbitrary arrests and detention, judicial harassment, enforced disappearance as well as torture, physical and psychological abuses;
- B. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the human rights situation in Egypt, especially the conditions in the overcrowded prisons, where detainees are routinely denied access to adequate medical care and treatment;
- C. Whereas between 15 and 19 November 2020, Egyptian authorities arrested three senior staff members from the NGO Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), namely Gasser Abdel-Razek (Executive director), Mohammed Basheer (Administrative

Manager), Karim Ennarah (Director of Criminal Justice), and charged them with terrorism and national security related offences; whereas the three staff members were granted bail and released on 3 December; whereas on 9 December, an Egyptian court upheld a prosecutor's decision to freeze their assets;

- D. Whereas EIPR's gender rights researcher, Patrick Zaki, was arrested in February 2020, and remains in pre-trial detention on charges relating to incitement to protest and to terrorist crimes; whereas on 6 December, his pre-trial detention for renewed for 45 days;
- E. whereas the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN human rights experts as well as the European Parliament and the EEAS expressed their concerns over the arrests of the EIPR staff;
- F. Whereas civil society organisations have documented that Egyptian authorities executed at least 110 people in 2020, with 57 of those happening in October and November alone, nearly double the recorded 32 people executed throughout 2019; whereas at least 39 further people are reported to be on death row at risk of imminent execution, including Isaiah al-Maqari, a Coptic Christian monk who has been sentenced to death on the basis of a confession allegedly obtained through torture, and who received only a 15 minute appeal hearing;
- G. Whereas Article 122 of the Child Law remains of serious concern as it allows children to be tried in mass trials in adult courts in certain circumstances and it has led to at least 17 juveniles receiving death sentences since 2011;
- H. Whereas the NGO Law of 2019 gives a restrictive definition of authorized civil society, strongly constrains the activities of both domestic and international NGOs, using the pretext of national security, and it gives the authorities broad monitoring powers and discretionary powers to regulate and dissolve NGOs;
- I. Whereas women human rights defenders in Egypt continue to face various forms of state-led harassment, notably in the form of defamatory campaigns and judicial prosecution; whereas activists defending the rights of LGBTIQI people and women face continuous repression, including under the guise of the preservation of "public morals";
- J. Whereas on 10 December prosecutors in Italy have charged four members of Egypt's national security agency over the kidnapping and murder of the Italian researcher Giulio Regeni in Cairo; whereas the lawyers of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) continue to provide their support to the Regeni legal team in Italy being the legal representatives in Egypt;"
- K. Whereas since at least 2013 in the Sinai Peninsula, the Egyptian armed forces and police have committed serious and widespread abuses against civilians, of which some may constitute war crimes;
- L. Whereas civil society groups reported that armoured-vehicles exported by France to the Egyptian Army were used by Egyptian security forces in excessive use of force against civilian protesters in violation of international use of force standards and human rights law; whereas small arms, including rifles, ammunition, equipment with reduced

lethality, such as tear gas, launchers, anti-riot projectiles, armoured vehicles, military helicopters exported to Egypt have been identified as presenting a substantial risk of being used in violation of human rights

- M. Whereas according to civil society observers, Egyptian authorities have used exported surveillance material to target human rights and labour activists, LGBT people, political activists, and academics;
- N. Whereas the EU is Egypt's first economic partner and its main source of foreign investment; whereas the EU and Egypt adopted Partnership Priorities in June 2017 that aim to enhance cooperation in a wide-range of areas, including in the area of security, counter-terrorism and judiciary reform;
- O. whereas EU bilateral assistance to Egypt under the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2017-20 is around EUR 500 million; whereas as of 2017, the total amount of ongoing EU aid commitments to Egypt channelled through the bilateral envelope already amounted to €1.3 billion; whereas as part of COVID-19 response, the Commission mobilised up to €289 million in bilateral assistance to support immediate, health-related and socio-economic needs in Egypt; whereas the total ongoing support (loans, grants and debt swaps) of EU, Member States and European Financial Institutions to Egypt amounts to €11 billion ;
- P. 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 at least twelve EU member states, notably France, flout these conclusions by supplying military or security equipment to Egypt that could be used for internal repression; whereas this includes small arms, ammunition, equipment with reduced lethality, armoured vehicles and military helicopters;
1. Denounces the continued human rights crisis in Egypt, notably the generalized and relentless crackdown on civil society organisations, human rights defenders, lawyers, protesters, journalists, trade unionists, media workers, women's rights activists, LGBTI people, students, political opponents and minorities;
 2. Condemns the dramatic number of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Egypt estimated between 60 000 and 100 000 by international CSOs; condemns the recent arrests of senior EIPR staff Gasser Abdel Razek, Karim Ennarah and Mohammad Basheer in apparent retaliation for their legitimate meeting with European diplomats in Cairo; while welcoming their provisional release, deplores the decision to freeze their assets and urges the Egyptian authorities to drop all charges, end all forms of harassment and intimidation as well as revoke any restrictive measures against them and EIPR director Hossam Bahgat;
 3. Calls on Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained or sentenced for carrying out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work or peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, including Ramy Shaath, Patrick Zaki, Mohamed Ramadan, Ezzat Ghoneim,

Haytham Mohamadeen, Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, Mahienour El-Massry, Mohamed El-Baqer, Hoda Abdelmoniem, Zyad el-Elaimy, Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, Ramy Kamel, Alaa Abdel Fattah, Abdelrahman Tarek, Ahmed Amasha, Hassan Barbary, Sanaa Seif, Mohamed Ibrahim, Esraa Abdel Fattah, Solafa Magdy, Hossam al-Sayyad, Kamal El-Balshy, Islam El-Kalhy, Mahmoud Hussein and Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh;

4. Calls once again on the Egyptian authorities to close Case 173/2011 (the ‘Foreign Funding Case’), and lift all travel bans imposed on at least 31 human rights defenders and staff members of human rights NGOs under the case;
5. Reiterates its call on Egyptian authorities to stop blocking the websites of local and international news organisations and human rights organisations and to release all media workers detained for doing their work or their relatives, including Kamal al-Balshy who was arbitrarily detained as a punitive measure against his brother, the journalist Khaled al-Balshy;
6. Expresses its deep concern for the conditions of detainees held in overcrowded and unsanitary places of detention, with inadequate access to or outright denial of medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic; calls on the Egyptian authorities to urgently decongest places of detention; denounces the arbitrary arrests, harassment and repression of medical workers for reporting and speaking out about the COVID-19 situation or the State response;
7. Notes the identification by Italian prosecutors on 10 December 2020 of four suspects over the kidnapping, torture and murder of Italian researcher Giulio Regeni in 2016; deplors that Egyptian authorities have failed to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators and urges them to fully cooperate with Italian prosecutors; warns the Egyptian authorities against taking any retaliatory measures against the witnesses or the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) and its lawyers;
8. Strongly condemns the dramatic scale of executions in Egypt and the handing down of death sentences against juveniles; urges the Egyptian authorities to decree a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the use of the death penalty;
9. Reiterates its call for a profound review of the EU’s relations with Egypt; insists that the holding of the next EU-Egypt Association Council meeting should be conditional on tangible improvements in Egypt’s human rights situation, including as regards the situation of the individual cases highlighted in this resolution; presses EU officials and Member States to publicly express concerns over the human rights situation in Egypt and to step up their support to human rights defenders and other victims of the ongoing repression; considers the awarding of honorific medals to Egyptian senior officials, notably by France and Germany, as an insult for past recipients of such prizes and calls for the rescinding of these decisions;
10. Welcomes the adoption by the Council of an EU Global Human Rights Sanctions regime and calls on the VP/HR and Member States to apply it to high-level Egyptian officials responsible for the most serious violations in the country, starting with President Sisi;

11. Calls, once again, for the restriction of the Commission's budget support operations only to supporting civil society; calls on the Commission to insure that ongoing EU funds for civil society, notably the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights most effectively supports civil society actors and human rights defenders at risk; calls for more transparency and the inclusion of ex ante human rights impact assessments and human rights safeguards for all forms of financial support provided by the EU as well as by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank to Egypt;
12. Deplores the continued security cooperation and arms exports from EU Member States, notably France and Germany, as well as by the United Kingdom, to Egypt, which run counter to the EU Common Position on Arms exports and the Council conclusions of 21 August 2013; calls for Member-States to comply with international and EU law by monitoring the use of weapons and equipment exported, and immediately ending the direct or indirect delivery, sale, transfer, transit or transshipment of any equipment where there is a substantial risk that it will be used by the Egyptian security forces to commit serious human rights violations or facilitate their commission;; encourages national parliamentarians in the relevant EU Member States to inquire into, monitor and exert appropriate parliamentary control on this matter; calls on the VP/HR to report on the current state of military and security cooperation by Member States with Egypt; calls for an EU-wide ban on export of any form of military and surveillance technology and equipment supplies to Egypt; reiterates the importance it attaches to a greater human rights focus in the control of exports of dual-use items including cyber-surveillance items;
13. Calls on the EEAS to attend and follow the trials of human rights defenders, political prisoners and other prisoners of conscience; to visit them in prison and to make public statements to support civil society and members of their family calling for their release;
14. Urges the EU and its member states to take the lead at the forthcoming session of the UN Human Rights Council to set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave human rights violations in Egypt;
15. Stresses the importance of ensuring that any arrangement between the EU and Egypt on migration must strictly comply with international human rights standards, respect the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees, and ensure adequate levels of transparency and accountability; reiterates that human rights should not be undermined by migration management and claims to support the fight against terrorism ;
16. 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.