



Plenary sitting

B9-0413/2023

3.10.2023

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 Egypt, in particular the sentencing of Hisham Kassem
(2023/2883(RSP))

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on behalf of the S&D Group

B9-0413/2023

Motion for a European Parliament resolution on Egypt, in particular the sentencing of Hisham Kassem (2023/2883(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular the resolution of 24 November 2022 on the human rights situation in Egypt

- having regard to Amnesty International press release of September 14, 2023 “Egypt: Immediately release prominent dissident on trial for online expression”

- having regard to Human Rights Watch press release of September 7, 2023 “Egypt: Prominent Critic Prosecuted Over Peaceful Speech”

A. whereas Egyptian authorities have arbitrarily detained Hisham Kassem, a prominent opposition politician and publisher since August 20, 2023, on charges of libel and slander related to online posts critical of a former government minister.

B. whereas in recent months, Hisham Kassem has vocally criticised the authorities’ handling of the economic crisis and the military’s role. In June 2023, he played a pivotal role in founding a coalition of liberal opposition parties called al-Tayar al-Hurr, or Free Current.

C. whereas an Egyptian court on 16 September 2023 has sentenced Hisham Kassem to six months in prison

D. whereas Egyptian authorities have violated Hisham Kassem’s fair trial rights, including his rights to adequate defence and to a public hearing. His lawyers were denied access to his casefile before the trial, while authorities banned diplomats and media from attending trial hearings.

E. whereas an appeal hearing has been set for 7 October 2023. If convicted, he faces up to three years’ imprisonment according to his lawyers.

F. whereas since the reactivation of the Presidential Pardons Committee in May 2022, a limited number of prisoners held for political reasons have been released, however thousands of political prisoners remain in jail, with restrictions on free speech as tight as ever and arbitrary arrests have persisted at an alarming rate.

1. Calls on Egypt’s authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Hisham Kassem, who has solely exercised his right to freedom of expression and to drop charges against him on criminal defamation and other politically motivated accusations.

2. Deeply deplores the continued lack of basic political rights and freedoms in Egypt.

3. Condemns in the strongest terms the Egyptian authorities' censorship, harassment and intimidation of representatives of Egypt's civil society,
4. Firmly condemns the continued arbitrary and pre-trial detention of tens of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt, many of whom are detained in inhuman conditions without access to a fair trial or basic rights,
5. Calls on Egyptian authorities to urgently halt the endless cycle of arrests and prosecutions targeting critical voices and stop using criminal defamation laws to muzzle dissent.
6. 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 Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt.