



Plenary sitting

B9-0422/2023

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))

Tomáš Zdechovský, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Ivan Štefanec, Vladimír Bilčík, Andrey Kovatchev, Janina Ochojska, Michaela Šojdrová, Jiří Pospíšil, Seán Kelly, Inese Vaidere
on behalf of the PPE Group

**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;
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Egypt is a key strategic partner of the EU and an important regional player in a region defined by instability and conflict; whereas EU-Egypt relations concern a multitude of important areas, ranging from energy, science and cultural cooperation to combating international terrorism;
- B. whereas the EU is ready to support Egypt in the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy in the form of capacity building and encourages Egypt to continue with the legislative changes envisioned in its strategy and in the Egyptian National Comprehensive Political Dialogue launched in July 2022;
- C. whereas on 20 August 2023, Hisham Kassem, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Free Current liberal political coalition, was arrested after former Labour Minister, Kamal Abu Aita, filed a defamation and slandering complaint against him; whereas Abu Aita, accused Kassem in an interview last month of pursuing a “foreign agenda” through the Free Current, and Kassem, in turn, pointed out that Abu Aita had been involved in a massive fraud case as a minister, leading to Abu Aita’s defamation suit;
- D. whereas prosecutors questioned Mr Kassem for six hours on August 20 before deciding to release him on bail of 5000 Egyptian pounds that he refused to pay out of principle, whereas his family then was denied of bailing him out;
- E. whereas police then also added a complaint accusing Kassem of defamation and assaulting a public servant, leading to a detention order;
- F. whereas on 16 September 2023, Hisham Kassem received a total of 6 month prison sentence and was fined a total of 30,000 Egyptian pounds; whereas his legal team filed an appeal against the decision, with a hearing set for 7 October 2023;
- G. whereas Egyptian legislation treats defamation as a criminal offence, punishable by up to five years imprisonment and defamation laws have been used to punish political opponents for expressing opinions critical of the government or public officials which are not compatible with Egypt’s obligations under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Egypt is a party

1. Expresses deep concern over the detention of Hisham Kassem and recalls that the UN Human Rights Committee has been clear that the mere fact that forms of expression are considered to be insulting to a public figure is not sufficient to justify the imposition of penalties and that defamation should rather be treated as a matter of civil litigation, given that criminal penalties for defamation impose an undue restriction and have a chilling effect on the right to freedom of expression;
2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the VP/HR EEAS, and the Government and Parliament of Egypt.