



Plenary sitting

B9-0423/2023

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

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**Motion for a European Parliament resolution on the case of 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 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to Rule 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Egypt is an important partner for the EU and its Member States and is critical to the security, stability and development of the wider Middle East and North African region;
- B. whereas the EU and its Member States continuously seek to support the Egyptian government in implementing domestic, economic, political and social reforms to strengthen Egypt's stability as well as combat terrorism and block illegal migration to the EU;
- C. whereas reports note increasing restrictions on the freedoms of expression and assembly, the media and civil society in Egypt; whereas authorities reportedly target government critics with harsh prison terms, extrajudicial violence, forced disappearances, and torture; whereas the Egyptian National Dialogue progresses slowly; whereas Bologna University alumnus Patrick Zaki, and human rights lawyer Mohamed El-Baquer, were granted a presidential pardon and released from prison;
- D. 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;
- E. whereas on 16 September 2023, Hisham Kassem was sentenced to a total of six months in prison for libel and slander against the former Minister, for insulting public employees after he was detained and fined a total of 30,000 Egyptian pounds; whereas his legal team filed an appeal and a hearing is scheduled for 7 October 2023;

- F. whereas Hisham Kassem has spoken out against censorship, government repression and the targeting of journalists in Egypt and faced legal challenges and harassment due to his activism; whereas he recently stated that the Egyptian President should seriously consider not running for a third term;
- G. whereas authorities note several steps that were taken to strengthen human rights in the country, including launching a human rights strategy, ending a state of emergency and releasing 1 430 prisoners since 2022;
1. Reaffirms that Egypt is a key strategic partner to the EU and its Member States and supports the Egyptian government to address the country's challenges;
 2. Expresses concern over Hisham Kassem's arrest and calls for his immediate and unconditional release; expresses further concern about the reported targeting of activists and government critics by the Egyptian authorities; welcomes the pardoning of Patrick Zaki and invites the political forces to step up the national dialogue process;
 3. Reminds the authorities that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential elements of EU-Egypt relations and the Egyptian Constitution;
 4. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to respect the rights of Christians and protect them against violence and discrimination and ensure the prosecution of those responsible; calls on Egypt to review its blasphemy laws;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the relevant parties.