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Situation in Egypt

European Parliament resolution of 17 February 2011 on the situation in Egypt

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, as ratified by Egypt in 1982,
- having regard to the European Council declaration on Egypt and the region of 4 February 2011,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on Egypt of 31 January 2011,
- having regard to the joint statement by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent developments in Egypt of 11 February 2011,
- having regard to the statement by President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek on the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak of 11 February 2011,
- having regard to the statement by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy on the situation in Egypt of 29 January 2011,
- having regard to the statements by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Egypt of 4 February, 3 February, 28 January and 27 January 2011 as well as on the elections to the People's Assembly of Egypt of 6 December 2010,
- having regard to the Fifth Statement of the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces of 13 February 2011,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2009: progress report on Egypt' (COM(2010)0207 - SEC(2010)0517),
- having regard to the joint decision of April 2009 by Egypt and the EU to work towards enhancing their relations, as proposed by Egypt in 2008,
- having regard to the EU-Egypt Association Agreement of 2004 and the Action Plan agreed in 2007,
- having regard to the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) since 2004, and in particular to the Commission's progress reports on its implementation,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of 2004 as updated in 2008,

- having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas recent demonstrations in several Arab countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East have called for political, economic and social reforms and have expressed strong popular demands for freedom, genuine democracy and better living conditions for the citizens,
- B. whereas Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stood down on 11 February 2011; whereas his powers have been handed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces; whereas the Supreme Council has requested the government recently appointed by President Mubarak to continue operating until a new government is formed, pledged to hand over power to an elected civilian government, and taken important decisions as announced in its Fifth Statement of 13 February 2011,
- C. whereas responding to the popular demand for freedom, genuine democracy and social justice in Egypt requires an immediate, serious and open dialogue with the participation of all political and social forces that respect democracy, uphold the rule of law and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, which dialogue should result in real and significant reforms,
- D. whereas peaceful protests against the Egyptian regime were met with violent repression from police using teargas, water cannons, rubber bullets and live ammunition as well as with attacks on demonstrators by armed individuals and pro-government militias, resulting in the death of hundreds of people; whereas hundreds of people, including human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers, have been arrested and detained,
- E. whereas the Egyptian Government took the unprecedented measure of shutting down the Internet in order to silence the demonstrators and limit the freedom of expression of the people; whereas media and legal centres such as Al Jazeera and the Hisham Mubarak Law Centre were closed by the military police,
- F. whereas the promotion of respect for democracy, human rights and civil liberties is a fundamental principle and aim of the EU and constitutes common ground for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean area; whereas the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was mainly focused on economic reforms and was unable to bring about the necessary political and institutional reforms; whereas the Union for the Mediterranean, which was supposed to enhance the EU's policy in the region, proved ineffective to counter the growing mistrust and meet the basic needs of the people concerned,
- G. whereas the quest for stability has often overshadowed the values of democracy, social justice and human rights in the EU's and its Member States' relations with southern neighbours in the past years; whereas human rights clauses in Association Agreements should be systematically backed up by a mechanism to implement those clauses; having regard in this context to the ongoing and necessary review of the ENP,
- H. whereas the European Parliament has repeatedly called for the lifting of the state of emergency, which has been in place since 1981, the strengthening of democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Egypt,
- I. whereas Egypt is a key partner of the EU in the Middle East; whereas the EU should contribute to the emergence of a democratic, prosperous and stable Egypt by encouraging

and supporting the renewal of the country,

- J. whereas Egypt is playing an active and crucial role in support of the Middle East Peace Process and in intra-Palestinian reconciliation; whereas the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has confirmed Egypt's commitment to implementing all international treaties and covenants to which it is party,
1. Expresses its solidarity with the Egyptian people, applauds their courage and determination, with special regard to the young generation, and strongly supports their legitimate democratic aspirations;
 2. Strongly condemns the violence and disproportionate force used against protesters and deeply regrets the resulting considerable loss of life and the high number of injuries; extends its condolences to the families of the victims; calls for an independent inquiry into the events leading to death, injuries and imprisonments, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
 3. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all peaceful demonstrators, prisoners of conscience, Egyptian and international human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers; urges in this respect the Egyptian authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of those detained and to ensure that they are protected from all forms of torture or other ill-treatment;
 4. Considers that the standing down of President Hosni Mubarak has opened up a new phase in the political transition in Egypt; calls for a genuine and open national political dialogue to be launched immediately with the participation of all key political and civil-society actors with the aim of paving the way for lifting the state of emergency, revision of the Constitution and the electoral law, free and fair elections, a democratically elected civilian government and genuine democracy in Egypt;
 5. Calls on the Egyptian armed forces to play a constructive role in avoiding further violence and to facilitate the political process; takes note of the decisions of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to suspend the Constitution, dissolve the parliament, establish a committee, which must include independent members, to amend articles of the Constitution, hold a popular referendum on these amendments, and hold parliamentary and presidential elections; calls again for a democratic process in which all political and civil-society actors should be involved in order to reach a national consensus;
 6. Stresses the importance of restoring all communication networks, including the Internet, without delay and fully respecting freedom of information, expression and association in Egypt;
 7. Expresses its strong support for reforms leading towards democracy, the rule of law and social justice in Egypt; reiterates its call for the lifting of the state of emergency; stresses again the importance of good governance, the fight against corruption, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Egypt, with special regard to freedom of conscience, religion and thought, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and media, freedom of association, women's rights and gender equality, the protection of minorities and the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation;
 8. Stresses the importance of considerably accelerating economic and social reforms in Egypt,

as freedom, economic development and a higher standard of living are essential for political and social stability in the country;

9. Calls on the EU and its Member States to actively support a rapid transition towards a peaceful, pluralist and just Egypt; supports, in a wider context, the European Council's view that the EU should lend its full support to transition processes in the region with the aim of creating democratic governance, pluralism and improved opportunities for economic prosperity and social inclusion and strengthening regional stability;
10. Calls on the EU, the Member States, political parties and foundations to help democratic political forces and civil-society organisations in Egypt to organise themselves in order to be able to participate fully in the transition to democracy; calls on the Egyptian authorities to ensure that Coptic Christian communities do not fall victim to current events and that all religious communities can live in peace and freely express their beliefs throughout the country;
11. Calls on the High Representative to promote the setting-up of a task force involving the European Parliament which can meet the need for support for the democratic transition process as expressed by those working for democratic change, in particular as regards free and democratic elections and institution-building, including developing an independent judiciary; calls on the High Representative to support the democratic transformation also by sending an electoral observation mission to forthcoming elections;
12. Welcomes Council Implementing Decision 2011/79/CFSP and Council Regulation (EU) No 101/2011 of 4 February 2011¹ imposing the freezing of assets owned or controlled by persons deemed to be responsible for the misappropriation of state funds in Tunisia and persons associated with them and calls on the Council to adopt the same measures as regards all responsible persons in Egypt;
13. Emphasises that events in Egypt, and in other countries in the region, highlight again the urgent need to develop more ambitious and efficient policies and instruments as well as to strengthen their budgetary background to encourage and support political, economic and social reforms in the EU's southern neighbourhood; stresses that the ongoing Strategic Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy must reflect current developments in the region and must come up with new improved ways to meet the needs and aspirations of the peoples; calls for better coordination with the EU's other policies vis-à-vis those countries;
14. Reiterates its demand for the EU to revise its democracy and human rights support policy so as to create an implementation mechanism for the human rights clause in all agreements with third countries; insists that the review of the ENP must prioritise criteria relating to the independence of the judiciary, respect for fundamental freedoms, pluralism and freedom of the press, and the fight against corruption; points out, in this regard, that the current Action Plans must be radically revised with the inclusion of clear priorities accompanied by incentives for political reforms; calls on the Council to define a set of political criteria that ENP countries must fulfil in order to be granted 'advanced status';
15. Considers crucial the role that the EU financial instruments for external action for the region, notably the ENPI, the EIDHR and the Stability Instrument, can play in this regard and calls for their strengthening in order to enable them to be used effectively and

¹ OJ L 31, 5.2.2011, pp. 40 and 1.

consistently in these exceptional circumstances; asks the High Representative to make full use of all relevant EU external financial instruments, including EIDHR; underlines that democratic scrutiny of these financial instruments by the European Parliament must be ensured; stresses also the importance of addressing urgently the question of rising food prices and in general of food security and rural development;

16. Calls on the Union for the Mediterranean to urgently reflect and act on recent events in order to put forward proposals on how to best promote democracy and human rights in its Member States and in the region and on possible reforms in order to make its own role stronger and more efficient; calls on the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to play an urgent and active role in mobilising the civil society of the Euro-Med region for the promotion of citizenship and participation;
17. Recognises the crucial role of Egypt in the Arab world and in the Middle East Peace Process and the importance of the Peace Agreement with Israel; calls on Egypt to remain committed to playing an active and constructive role to find lasting peace in the Middle East with a particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Palestinian reconciliation, and calls for the Egypt-Israel peace treaty to be maintained; welcomes the statement by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces that Egypt is committed to implementing all international treaties and covenants to which it is party;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States and the Egyptian authorities.