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TEXTS ADOPTED

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**P9\_TA(2023)0351**

**Egypt, in particular the sentencing of Hisham Kassem**

**European Parliament resolution of 5 October 2023 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 Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Hisham Kassem is an important liberal voice in Egypt, publisher and advocate for media freedom and the rule of law;
- B. whereas in June 2023, ahead of the December 2023 presidential elections, he played a pivotal role in founding the Free Current coalition of liberal opposition parties and figures, criticising the government's economic and political record; whereas he was detained on defamation and slander charges for an online post criticising former minister Abu Eita and refused to pay the equivalent of EUR 150 for his bail; whereas on 20 August 2023, he was arrested on similar charges and, on 16 September 2023, he was sentenced to six months in prison and fined by the Cairo Economic Misdemeanours Court; whereas he appealed and the court postponed his hearing to 7 October 2023;
- C. whereas his defence rights were not adequately protected, his lawyers were not given access to his case file before the trial and authorities denied his right to a public hearing and prevented the media and diplomatic representatives from attending;
- D. whereas Nasserist Left Party leader Ahmed El Tantawy has faced harassment by authorities since his presidential candidacy announcement in August; whereas at least 73 of his campaign staff and supporters have since been arrested, while Citizen Lab found that his phone was hacked using Cytrox's Predator spyware;
- E. whereas a limited number of political prisoners have been pardoned since May 2022, while twice as many have since been arrested and thousands remain imprisoned;
- 1. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Hisham Kassem and drop all politically motivated charges against him; calls for the EU Delegation and Member States to visit him in prison;

2. Underlines the importance of holding credible, free and fair elections; urges authorities to stop harassing peaceful opposition figures such as aspiring presidential candidate and former member of parliament Ahmed El Tantawy; expresses deep concern over Egypt's restrictive electoral process; recalls that defamation laws cannot be used to imprison political opponents;
3. Urges authorities to uphold the rule of law, freedom of expression, press, media and association, and judicial independence, to stop stifling opposition voices through arbitrary detention, digital surveillance, enforced disappearances and torture, to immediately and unconditionally release the tens of thousands of prisoners arbitrarily detained for peacefully expressing their opinion, including award winner Alaa Abdel Fattah and 20 journalists, and to lift online censorship against independent media; welcomes the limited release of unjustly detained political prisoners like Patrick Zaki;
4. Urges EU Member States to raise Egypt's human rights violations in the upcoming EU-Egypt Association Council and to support a monitoring and reporting mechanism at the UN Human Rights Council;
5. Calls for effective implementation of the Dual-Use Regulation<sup>1</sup> to protect opposition voices;
6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Egyptian authorities, and translate it into Arabic.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 setting up a Union regime for the control of exports, brokering, technical assistance, transit and transfer of dual-use items (recast), OJ L 206, 11.6.2021, p. 1.