

Egypt: Members appalled by the abysmal treatment of human rights defenders

MEPs on the Subcommittee on Human Rights are deeply worried by the human rights situation and prison conditions in Egypt, in the midst of a lingering crackdown by the country's authorities.

On Wednesday morning, MEPs on the Subcommittee on Human Rights debated the alarming human rights situation and continuing crackdown on civil society in Egypt, together with, among others, the sister of prominent jailed Egyptian human rights defender Alaa Abdel Fattah, Ms Mona Seif, and the parents of murdered Italian researcher Giulio Regeni, Claudio Regeni and Paola Deffendi.

Following briefings by the guest speakers, Members reiterated their concern about the appalling conditions facing human rights defenders imprisoned in the country. The widespread impunity for Egyptian officials involved in perpetrating severe violations of fundamental freedoms are also of great concern. MEPs are deeply disappointed with the EU's perceived lack of success in engaging with the Egyptian authorities to improve the human rights situation in the country. They regretted the choice that many EU countries have made to pursue relations with the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi for security, political and economic reasons.

During the discussion, representatives from prominent human rights organisations such as the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms and the Committee for Justice, who work on reporting on prison conditions and on individual cases of detainees, also took the floor. A number of individuals that the Parliament demanded be released in its [December 2020 resolution on Egypt](#) were mentioned: among others, Patrick Zaki, Ramy Shaath, Mohamed el Baqer and Ibrahim Metwaly.

End to arms trade

In the midst of the intensifying crackdown, some MEPs urged the EU to follow through on Parliament's resolution to halt all exports of arms, surveillance technology and other security equipment to the country that can facilitate attacks on human rights defenders and civil society activists. Others also stressed that the EU must lay down clear human rights criteria to guide its partnership with the Egyptian authorities before any talks on a new era for bilateral relations can begin.

Some Members also deplored the Egyptian authorities' lack of political will to provide support and clarity in a wide range of documented human rights cases, including the 2016 murder of Italian researcher Giulio Regeni. They called on all EU countries to jointly put pressure on the country's government to ensure that the alleged four main murder suspects in Mr Regeni's case can receive a fair trial in Italy.

Finally, some called for an urgency resolution on Egypt to be tabled at the next Strasbourg plenary.

You can watch the meeting again [here](#). (27.10.2021)

Additional information

On 18 December last year, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Egypt, in particular the case of the activists of the [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights](#). The text stressed that the ongoing arrests and detentions in the country are part of a broader pattern of intimidating organisations that defend human rights, exacerbated by the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. It called on the Egyptian authorities and security forces to put an end to all these acts.

Further information

[European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights](#)
[Profile of Maria Arena, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights](#)
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