



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان



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Item 3 ID with SR on Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) – Joint Oral Intervention with Nazra for Feminist Studies, and the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance

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Thank you, Mr. President

This intervention is presented on behalf of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Nazra for Feminist Studies, and the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance.

Many laws which constricted freedom of expression under Mubarak remain on the books, including laws penalizing criticism of the authorities, insults to religion, offenses to public morals, or speech which “undermines” certain state interests, as well as provisions containing overly broad and vague language used to silence critical voices. Criminal penalties for defamation and other statements of opinion also persist. All of these provisions violate citizens’ right to freedom of expression.

As under Mubarak, these laws are being used to intimidate journalists and media outlets, who are charged for example with “insulting the president” in cases filed by the presidency or supporters of the ruling party. Complaints based on “defamation of religion,” “spreading propaganda for terrorist groups,” and “insulting state institutions” are also used.

Journalists have also faced physically attacks during their coverage of events, both by state and non-state actors. These attacks culminated during the clashes at the Ittihadeyya presidential palace in December 2012, when journalist Al-Husseini Abul-Dheif was killed by a bullet to the head. Violations have recently escalated to include death threats, abductions, and repeated sieges of Media Production City. Rather than fulfilling their responsibility to protect journalists, the current authorities have issued statements including direct threats and claims that the media is responsible for exacerbating the problems in Egypt, which implicitly give license to both security forces and supporters of the FJP to attack journalists and media establishments.

In addition, grave violations against women have been committed with impunity under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and under the current government. Women rights defenders were physically attacked and sexually harassed in front of the *Ittihadeyya* presidential palace last December by supporters of the ruling party. During demonstrations last January, 19 cases of gang rapes of women protestors were reported; in 2 of these cases, the rapes were committed with metal rods and a knife. No serious investigations have been undertaken by the government to hold those

responsible to account. This escalation of the violence directly deters women from participating in the public sphere and the political affairs of their own country.

Last March, the Egyptian Presidency launched the Initiative for Supporting Rights and Liberties of Egyptian Women, which has failed to establish a framework to protect and further women's rights or to address the use of sexual violence against women in the public sphere, emphasizing instead the need to "respect cultural specificity and Sharia."

We call upon this Council to urge the Egyptian authorities to ensure that freedom of expression is fully protected in law and practice, to secure public space for all women, and to immediately open and prioritize serious investigations into grave violations against women and media professionals in Egypt.

Thank you, Mr. President