

## **Honorable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,**

Thank you for the opportunity to address Egypt's human rights record in this UPR pre session. I speak on behalf of a coalition of 13 Egyptian human right organizations, and will be focussing on the issues of enforced disappearances, torture and arbitrary detention in Egypt. Those grave violations persist because they are state policy. They are perpetrated in a systematic and widespread manner.

Since the last Egypt UPR in 2019, the Egyptian government spent many PR efforts to whitewash its human rights record and circumvent recommendations made by peer States at the last UPR. For example, in 2021, the government adopted a National Strategy for Human Rights which lowers the bar compared to the recommendations Egypt received from UN member states. In April 2022 the president called for a "national dialogue" and re-instated a Presidential Pardons Committee. Both failed in stopping the mass use of arbitrary detention against peaceful dissenters and the use of enforced disappearances and torture. Those violations continue to happen in the name of preservation of national security using the penal code, anti-terror legislations, the cybercrime law, protest and gathering laws.

The table you see on the screen summarizes the figures for each type of violation from April 2022 until today, hence covering the period where the Egyptian government pretends improvements have been made.

Note however that these alarming figure are a conservative estimate of the violations and don't include for example disappearances happening in north Sinai or mass arrests of refugees, which will be covered in the next presentations.

Roughly, for every 10 political prisoners released, 25 new ones were arrested. Those include a potential presidential candidate and members of his campaign, but also protesters, journalists, workers, and human rights defenders. Many of those are detained beyond the maximum periods of pre-trial detention in Egyptian law or accused in new cases in what we call "rotation". In the lead up to and during COP27, hosted by Egypt, over 1200 Egyptians were arrested on accusation of mobilizing for protests on 11 November 2022, and most remained in custody beyond one year and half.

Over 600 documented cases of enforced disappearances that we know of happened during the same period. These are documented cases, much more may have been reported but not documented, notwithstanding the unreported ones. An estimated 1100 people received death sentences, 38 were executed and 132 died in custody, mostly because of medical negligence.

### **1. Enforced disappearances**

The Egyptian National Security Agency, have systematically abducted citizens, holding them incommunicado in premises under its control for extended periods all while denying holding them. Victims of these enforced disappearances include activists, journalists, lawyers, and politically active citizens, many of whom were taken solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In some situations the military also perpetrate enforced disappearances.

Most disappeared then appear with traces of torture in front of State Security Prosecution where they are accused of belonging to a terror group and spreading false information

undermining national security under the draconian 2015 Anti-terrorism law and the 2018 Cybercrime law. The Egyptian Prosecution virtually never accuse any National Security officer of any abuse.

## **2. Arbitrary detention**

Arbitrary detention remains a widespread tool of repression. Individuals detained arbitrarily are often held for months or years without charge or trial, or under the guise of pretrial detention that is repeatedly renewed without due process. Those arrested are subjected to harsh interrogation techniques, including torture, to extract forced confessions. These practices stand in stark violation of Egypt's Constitution, national laws, as well as its international obligations under the ICCPR.

A draft Criminal Procedures Code in parliament, although would shorten pre-trial detention periods, would undermine the already little fair trial guarantees in the current Criminal Procedures Code, providing more concentration of power in the hands of Public Prosecution and Security agencies. The draft Code would essentially legalize violations of the right to fair trial written but violated in the current Criminal Procedures Code.

## **3. Torture and other ill-treatment**

Torture remains endemic in Egypt, including beatings, electric shocks, and prolonged solitary confinement, is regularly employed to silence detainees or punish them for alleged political dissent. Detention conditions are often inhumane, with severe overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate access to medical care, leading to deteriorating health and, in some cases, deaths in custody. Abusive measures continue by National Security officers in new built prisons, such as medical negligence and banning prisoners from family visit from privately communicating with their lawyer. Limitations on family visits to prisoners introduced at the time of the Corona pandemic continue to be applied until now.

These practices not only violate Egypt's domestic laws but also contravene the Convention against Torture. It is essential that Egypt establish and implement effective measures to end torture in detention centers, ensure accountability, and provide victims with justice and redress. In 2023, the UN Committee against Torture concluded after its review of Egyptian government report that torture remains widespread and systematic.

## **4. Recommendations**

To address these human rights violations, we recommend the following recommendations:

- Release all prisoners detained solely for exercising of their rights to freedom of expression, association or assembly and review all laws imposing restrictions on those rights to bring them in line with the ICCPR.
- Eliminate the abuse of pretrial detention and establish independent judicial oversight to review cases of individuals held without trial.
- Ensure that the judiciary operates independently in processing detention cases and that detainees have immediate access to legal representation.

- Initiate transparent and impartial investigations into all cases of alleged enforced disappearances, torture or other ill-treatment and death in custody, with a clear mandate to hold perpetrators accountable, including high-ranking officials responsible for authorizing or condoning these practices.
- Prohibit incommunicado detention and ensuring that all detainees are promptly presented before a judge.
- Allow independent monitoring of all detention facilities including by human rights organizations.
- Accede the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as previously recommended by several member states.
- Accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.
- Enforce a moratorium on execution in view of the abolition of the death penalty and accede to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thank you.