



Human Rights Council - 28th session
Item 6 - Adoption of the report on the UPR of Egypt
Oral statement

Mr. President,

We recall that many independent Egyptian human rights organizations did not participate in the UPR session last November for fear of reprisals upon their return to Egypt. This fact speaks volumes about the situation in the country.

While the authorities claim that they consider civil society as a partner, recent measures demonstrate a hostile approach to independent human rights NGOs in particular. Amendments to the Penal Code provide for life imprisonment for anyone who receives foreign funding with the aim of "harming national security" – a vague wording that can be used to target independent NGOs. The newly adopted "terrorist entities" law contains provisions that violate Egypt's international obligations, and could be used to target independent civil society.

Several human rights defenders, such as Mahienour El-Massry, Yara Sallam and Sanaa Seif, and bloggers, such as Alaa Abdel Fattah, also continue to be targeted and sentenced on spurious charges.

Since the amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code in 2013, there is no longer a time limit for preventive detention for crimes punishable by life imprisonment or death. This has been used arbitrarily and as a form of punishment. One emblematic case is that of journalist Mahmoud Abu Zied, who has been detained since August 2013 without a trial.

Mr. President,

The Egyptian authorities continue to deny the mass killings committed in August 2013, when at least 1,000 individuals were killed in the dispersals of the pro-Morsy sit-ins in Cairo. To date, perpetrators have not been held accountable. The findings of the three national fact-finding commissions have not been made public – only summaries were released.

The claim that no one has been punished for their opinion and political affiliation is baseless. Thousands of political prisoners have been sentenced to hefty prison sentences in mass trials that are marred by irregularities and violations of due process.

Finally, Mr. President, the government's approach to tackling violence against women has been piecemeal and ineffective. The national strategy has been drawn up without adequate consultation of civil society. Laws criminalizing violence against women contain significant gaps, in particular an inadequate definition of rape and the absence of provisions criminalizing domestic violence, including marital rape. We regret that the UPR was a missed opportunity for Egypt to address this human rights issue.

Thank you for your attention.