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Human Rights Council: 28th Session
Universal Periodic Review: Egypt

20th March 2015

Oral Intervention

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

Delivered by Mr. John Foley

Thank you Mr. President,

My organization makes this statement in partnership with the the *Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network*, and in solidarity with the many Egyptian NGOs, civil society members, human rights defenders, and individual journalists who have borne the brunt of one of the most extreme clampdowns on the rights to freedoms of expression, association, and assembly that this world has ever known.

We welcome the constructive recommendations made to Egypt by many member states. Specifically, we are grateful for Tunisia's recommendation that Egypt must guarantee an environment conducive to the work of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society organisations, and the call from the USA to release those detained solely for exercising rights to freedom of expression, or for membership in a political group.

Mr. President, I make some illustrative examples of the severity of this issue in Egypt, and the disconnect between commitments made in this chamber and the lived reality on the ground.

On June 21, 2014, Yara Sallam was arrested with 23 other people on charges of demonstrating near the presidential palace in Cairo. The demonstration was organized to oppose the Egyptian protest law, which has been recognized by numerous bodies, including the Egyptian government, as repressive and in complete violation of the constitution. Yara was the recipient of the 2013 North Africa Shield, an award established by the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network to recognize outstanding activism and bravery, and selected by a jury composed of the African Commission's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders. She cannot be here. Yara Sallam has paid the price of two years behind bars, for exercising her right to peaceful assembly.

This statement is made in solidarity with her, with human rights activist Shiamaa al-Sabbagh, shot and killed by Egyptian Police on 24th January 2015, and all other victims- individuals and institutions- of one of the most extreme assaults on human rights defenders, civic space, freedom of assembly, expression, and assembly ever seen on the African continent.

I thank you Mr. President.
