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Egypt: End violent crackdown on peaceful protests and restore communications with world

The international Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today called on the Egyptian authorities to end its violent crackdown on protesters engaged in peaceful demonstrations, exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. The ICJ also called on the authorities to restore Internet and mobile phone communications, access to which has apparently been widely blocked, leaving most Egyptians unable to communicate with each other or with the outside world.

At least 10 people have reportedly been killed and more than 1300 arrested during protests in Cairo, Suez and Sinai. The protesters have called for reforms aimed at curtailing political repression, poverty, corruption, and unemployment under President Hosni Mubarak's 30-year-old regime.

"The Egyptian authorities must immediately end the unlawful and disproportionate use of violent force, some of which has been lethal. They must immediately and unconditionally release persons arrested, unless they are charged with a recognizable crime and afforded full fair trial guarantees under international law and standards", said Saïd Benarbia, ICJ Legal Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa Programme. *"The authorities must also end their lock-down on the Internet, including social networking websites, and mobile phone services. These measures clearly violate the right of individuals in Egypt to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information."* said Saïd Benarbia.

Under their international obligations, Egyptian authorities must conduct full, impartial and prompt investigations into all allegations of extrajudicial killings and other abuses committed by security forces, with a view to holding those responsible accountable.

Over the last 30 years, Egypt has been governed under an effective permanent state of emergency, under which political dissidents and human rights defenders have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, including secret and incommunicado detention; widespread use of torture and ill-treatment; and flagrantly unfair trials before exceptional and military courts. Restrictions on the freedom of expression, association and assembly, in contravention of Egypt's international legal obligations, have also been widespread.

For more information , please contact Saïd Benarbia, Middle East & North Africa Legal Adviser, at +41229793817

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising fifty-two of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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