

Q/A: Joint declaration by a group of States on Egypt at the 46th session UN Human Rights Council (HRC) - Friday 12 March 2021

On 12 March 2021 at the HRC, the Ambassador of Finland to the UN in Geneva delivered a joint declaration on behalf of 31 States¹ urging Egypt to end its repression against human rights defenders, civil society activists, LGBTI persons, journalists, political opponents, lawyers and peaceful critics **under the guise of counter-terrorism**. The State joint declaration is not a resolution, but it is a first step to reach that goal.

Why is it significant?

1. Egypt has long escaped scrutiny at the HRC over its ongoing grave rights violations. The last time States delivered a joint declaration at the HRC was in 2014. Since then, civil society has been ringing the alarm bell that the situation is getting worse, but States were not willing to lead any action at the HRC. This lack of action at the HRC contributed to the escalation of repression against all peaceful critics.
2. The agenda item of the HRC where the State joint declaration is expected is item 4: this space is dedicated for grave and systematic human rights violations. For example, other countries debated under this agenda include: Syria, Venezuela, Burundi, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, and South Sudan.
3. For the first time ever, States are drawing attention to Egypt's practice of "rotation": adding detainees to new cases with similar charges after the legal limit for pre-trial detention has expired.

Why now? Following the arrests of three staff of the [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights \(EIPR\)](#) in November 2020 (a prominent independent Egyptian human rights organization) after meeting with 13 Western diplomats in Cairo, momentum among States began to finally grow in Geneva. [Over a 100 civil society organisations from across the world warned](#) States that if they do not take action at this 46th session of the HRC, it could signal to the Egyptian government that they can continue their attempts to annihilate the human rights movement in the country, with impunity.

What's next? [Over a 100 civil society organisations from across the world have urged](#) the HRC to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the human rights situation in Egypt. We will be working to follow up at the upcoming sessions of the HRC to ensure the adoption of a resolution that would establish the mechanism we called for.

What does the State joint declaration urge Egypt to do? (full text attached)

- Guarantee space for civil society including human rights defenders and journalists to work without fear of intimidation, harassment, arrest, detention or any other form of reprisal, lift travel bans and asset freezes against human rights defenders – including EIPR staff
- Lift restrictions on media and digital freedom, end the practice of blocking the websites of independent media outlets, and release all journalists who have been arrested in the course of practicing their profession

¹ Finland, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America.

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- **End the use of terrorism charges to hold human rights defenders and civil society activists in extended pre-trial detention and the practice of adding detainees to new cases with similar charges after the legal limit for pre-trial detention has expired**
- Cease the use of the terrorism entities list to punish individuals for exercising their right to freedom of expression
- Guarantee due process, including ending limitations on lawyers seeing evidence or accessing their clients
- Ensure accountability and immediate end of impunity
- Constructively engage with the Office of the High Commissioner, and to fully cooperate with UN Special Procedures mandates

What's the key message we want civil society to convey? The State joint declaration urges Egypt to end its use of terrorism charges to hold defenders and activists in extended pre-trial detention. Thus, **Egypt must immediately and unconditionally release everyone detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association!**

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [found](#) that arbitrary detention is a systemic problem in Egypt, and could constitute crimes against humanity². For example, the following individuals who were mentioned in public communications since 2013 by UN human rights experts and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights remain arbitrarily detained. **NOTE: THE BELOW IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST, BUT BASED ON THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO OUR ORGANIZATIONS.**

[Abdelmageed Meshali](#), [Ahmed Abdel Atty](#), [Ahmed Douma](#), [Ahmed El Hedeby](#), [Ahmed Al Khateeb](#), [Ahmed Maatoug](#), [Ahmed Amasha](#), [Aisha El Shatr](#), [Alaa Abdel Fattah](#), [Alaa Essam](#), [Asaad El-Sheikha](#), [Ayman Ali](#), [Ayman al-Serafy](#), [Ahmed Sabii](#), [Badr Mohammed Badr](#), [Bahaa Ouda](#), [Bassem Kamal Mohamed Ouda](#), [Esraa Abdel Fattah](#), [Essam El-Haddad](#), [Ezzat Ghoneim](#), [Galal el Behairy](#), [Gehad El-Haddad](#), [Hassan Barbary](#), [Haytham Mohamadein](#), [Hoda Abdel Moneam](#), [Hosam Al-Din Khalaf](#), [Hossam El Sayad](#), [Ibrahim Ata](#), [Ibrahim Ezz El-Din](#), [Ibrahim Metwally](#), [Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud Mohamed al-Yamani](#), [Ismail Alexandrani](#), [Kamal Elbalshy](#), [Khaled El-Kazaz](#), [Khalil Rizk](#), [Mohamed Abo Horira](#), [Mohamed Adel](#), [Mohamed El-Baqer](#), [Mohamed Ibrahim Radwan](#), [Mohamed El Hedeby](#), [Mohamed Ramadan](#), [Mohamed Salah](#), [Nour Al-Dien Abd Allah Ali Abdallah](#), [Ola Yusef Al-Qaradawi](#), [Patrick Zaki](#), [Ramy Kamel](#), [Ramy Shaath](#), [Salah-Eldeen Abdel-Haleem Soltan](#), [Sanaa Seif](#), [Sherif al-Rouby](#), [Solafa Magdy](#), [Tareq El Salakawy](#), [Zyad El-Elaimy](#).

What can you do to support disseminating the State joint declaration?

1. Disseminate on social media profiles of all those arbitrarily detained whom your organization is working on- **especially on Friday**. For twitter use the following #s:
 - a. In English → #HRC46
 - b. In Arabic → #الحرية_للمعتقلين
2. Create infographs for social media about the content of the State joint declaration
3. Publish a statement on your website and disseminate it widely in your organization's newsletters

² "Under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty in violation of the rules of international law could constitute crimes against humanity," [said](#) the Working Group and that it "has reached similar conclusions in other cases of detention against minors in Egypt".

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4. Outreach to your media contacts to cover the story