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Recent developments in Egypt

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt in particular of 17 February 2011 on the situation in Egypt, of 27 October 2011 on the situation in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian communities, and of 17 November 2011 on Egypt, in particular the case of blogger Alaa Abdel-Fattah

– having regard to its annual reports on the situation of human rights in the world, and in particular to its resolution of 16 December 2010 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2009,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and to Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, to which Egypt is party,

– having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Egypt, and in particular those on the violence the days before the parliamentarian elections, on 26 November 2011, on the continued crackdown on civil society in Egypt on 1 February 2012, on EU response on the football tragedy in Egypt on 2 February 2012, and her statement on 23 of January 2012 regarding the transferring power to civilian rule as quickly as possible,

– having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 10 October 2011, having regard to the European Council Conclusions on Egypt on 23 October 2011,

– having regard to the Joint Communication on ‘A new response to a changing neighbourhood’ of the European Commission and the HR/VP to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions of 25 May 2011,

– having regard to the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,

– having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas a committee to review civil institutions and NGOs aimed at tightening legal control on foreign funding of civil society organizations was announced in October 2011 and consequently a request was issued to the Central Bank to monitor all bank transitions of NGOs; whereas, at the same time, the

state security prosecutor accused organisations that have illegally received funding from foreign sources of "grand treason" and "conspiracy" against Egypt through foreign agendas aimed at harming Egyptian national security; whereas the defamatory campaign against these organisations launched by the state-owned press served to de-legitimise and stigmatise them in the eyes of the public as actors acting against the interest of Egypt;

B. whereas on 29 December 2012 Egypt's public prosecution officers, with back-up from security forces, have launched raids on 17 national and international human rights and pro-democracy organisations based in Cairo, including the Arab Centre for Independence of Justice and Legal Professions (ACIJP), the Budgetary and Human Rights Observatory, the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute and Freedom House; whereas during the raids security forces confined staff to their offices, forbid them to make phone calls and seized laptops and other documents that prove these NGOs receive foreign funds without informing authorities;

C. whereas twenty-seven human rights organizations describe these raids as an unprecedented campaign against political activists and rights entities after authorities had checked the bank accounts of the accused NGOs and Sameh Abou Zeid, the Minister of Justice-appointed judge presiding over this investigation, said evidence proves that several foreign and local NGOs have indeed received such unauthorized funds;

D. whereas on 5 February 2012 Egyptian investigators filed criminal charges against 44 international and national civil society workers, including 19 Americans, 14 Egyptians, 5 Serbs, 2 Germans, 2 Lebanese, 1 Jordan and 1 Palestinian; whereas all of them face a travel ban preventing them from leaving Egypt; whereas the law being used to pursue these workers is one of the era of former President Mubarak, which the government had said it intended to repeal;

E. whereas according to US Congress continued restriction of the activities and harassment of international and Egyptian staff will be looked at with great concern, particularly in light of Egypt's annual U.S. military assistance of $1.3 billion;

F. whereas the clashes between supporters of two rival teams, the local Al-Masry and Cairo based al-Alhy in Port Said stadium on 1 February 2012 revealed the death of at least 79 people and more than 200 injured under the indifference and lack of action of the security forces; whereas clashes demanding an end to military rule has amplified through out Cairo and other major cities in Egypt during several days, causing more victims; whereas security forces continue to use fire tear gas, birdshot and rubber bullets at protesters at close range causing deaths and serious injuries;

G. whereas the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has failed to conduct an investigation into the reports of sexual assault of female protestors, including the so-called 'virginity checks' and death threats against female protestors; whereas civilians arrested under the emergency law continue being tried before emergency courts and military tribunals, which fall short of the minimum international standards of fair trial and the right to defence;

H. whereas according to international and national organisations, there is no improvement in human rights protection in Egypt throughout the past 10 months of military rule whereby the SCAF has been accused of using life ammunition against peaceful civilians, of conducting activities hostile to fundamental freedoms, of

I. whereas the European Union has several times called on an end of the violence in Egypt and stressed the necessity of transferring power to civilian rule as quickly as possible as accepted by popular referendum in March 2011;

J. whereas no international institutions, including the EU, had been invited to observe the elections,

except for a few local NGOs that received the authorisation on the ee of the elections day; whereas the international community pointed out some shortcomings and some observers reported problems outside the polling stations, but nevertheless the elections were internationally accepted as having taken place in a democratic way; whereas the SCAF eliminated the quota of 64 seats assigned to women in the People's Assembly and limiting the gender issue to a requirement for the political parties to nominate at least one female candidate in their lists which resulted in only 1% of the members of the People's Assembly being women;

1. Expresses once again its solidarity with the Egyptian people in this critical and difficult period; Expresses its deep concern that the democratic transition to which the SCAF said it was committed to, has led to no democratic reform and an increasing crackdown on political dissent, freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; calls on the SCAF to respect the demands of the January 25 revolution namely to respect Egyptians' aspirations to freedom, dignity and justice.

2. Strongly condemns the ongoing crackdown on international and national human rights and pro-democracy organisations in Egypt and views it as a way to silence voices critical of ongoing human rights violations; considers that these attacks constitute a severe violation of the right to freedom of association, as provided in Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

3. Urges the SCAF and the Egyptian government to immediately put an end to all forms of harassment or intimidation to which civil society organisations are subjected, whether direct or indirect, and especially to drop all criminal charges and stop the current media campaign against NGOs; urges the HR/VP to be vocal on the necessity for Egyptian authorities to adopt a new association law based on international human rights standards and in close consultation with NGOs and human rights and pro-democracy groups;

4. Recalls on the Egyptian authorities the importance of giving civil society organisations the opportunity to play their role in building a sustainable democracy and calls on the Egyptian authorities to facilitate and allow in this regard foreign organisations, including political foundations, to continue their work on the ground without arbitrary restrictions;

5. Calls for an independent, transparent and thorough investigation into the events of the Port Said stadium clashes that took place on 1 February 2012 as well as into the reports of sexual assault of female protestors, including the so-called 'virginity tests' and death threats against female protestors, which should be conducted by an independent and impartial judiciary, in order to hold all those responsible to account;

6. Underlines the fundamental importance of civil society in any democratic society as well as the freedom of expression and media plurality and calls in this regard on the Egyptian authorities and the Egyptian People's Assembly to fully associate and consult with civil society organisations in the law making process to improve the legitimacy and the efficiency of the law;

7. Calls for further clarification about the constitutional process, its timeline and its democratic principles; calls on the Egyptian authorities to make sure that any constitutional provision is inclusive and leaves no possibility for discrimination of anyone in Egyptian society or puts any institution above the representatives of the People, including the right for the Members of the People's Assembly to amend, adopt and reject the entirety of the national budget, including the budget of the ministry of defence;

8. Stresses the importance of holding free, fair and transparent elections and encourages the EU and its Member States to continue supporting and assisting the Egyptian authorities, political parties and civil society in the efforts aimed at achieving this goal; calls on the SCAF to allow independent observers to witness and monitor the upcoming presidential elections;

9. Points out that the widespread use of military and emergency courts contribute to increasing concerns regarding Egyptian authorities and represents a clear obstacle to the democratic aspirations of Egyptians; calls for the full lifting of the Emergency Law in accordance with the first demands of the January 25 revolution and with announcements made by the SCAF and the government before elections were held, including the lifting of the emergency law for suspects of acts of thugery; urges the Egyptian authorities to end the referring of civilians to emergency and military courts and to guarantee them a just and fair trial in civil courts;

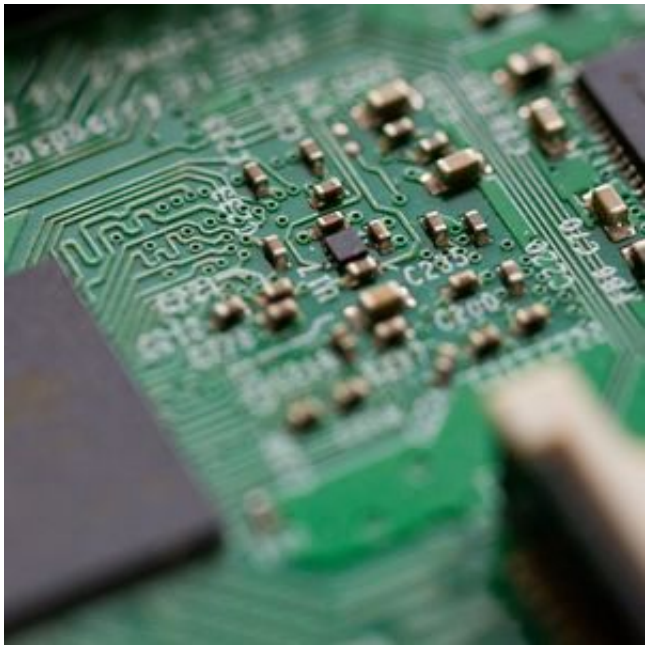
10. Calls on the HR/VP, the EEAS and the Commission to guarantee that the respect for and the promotion of human rights and fundamental rights, including the independence of the judiciary and of the media, the lifting of the emergency law, the reinforcement of the role of the civil society and of women and the reform of security forces including the former state security apparatus, will be seen as priorities within the renewed ENP EU-Egypt Action Plan for 2012-2016 and condition further EU funding to Egypt;

11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

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