



United Nations Human Rights Council: 22<sup>nd</sup> Session

Item 2: General Debate

Oral Intervention- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

4 March 2013

Delivered by: Paola Salwan Daher

Thank you Mr. President,

As the Arab region continues to witness ongoing waves of mass protest calling for democracy and fundamental rights, CIHRS draws attention to continuing human rights violations in the context of peaceful protests and restrictions on the right to freedom of assembly still being carried out by many governments in the region.

This problem is one of legislation as well as practice. Some countries in the region, such as Sudan, have no assembly law at all but instead rely on their criminal codes to regulate assemblies, while Saudi Arabia imposes an outright ban on the exercise of this right. Assembly laws enacted or currently in draft form in countries as varied as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain fall far short of meeting international standards and are all in need of major reform. In many cases, these laws exhibit signs of careful drafting, and the intention is clear: to suppress, rather than support, the right to freedom of assembly. These laws restrict assemblies in a variety of ways, including through requiring prior authorization from the government for gatherings, granting the authorities broad powers to condition or prohibit assemblies as they see fit, holding organizers unduly responsible for any acts identified as criminal which may occur during the assembly, imposing excessive penal sanctions for minor infractions or breaches to laws which are themselves overly restrictive, limiting freedom of expression during assemblies, and failing to limit the use of force against protestors by police or holding state security accountable when they abuse the rights of those assembling.

In this context, we draw attention to the report of the OHCHR on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests submitted to this session. In particular, we endorse the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings within this report concerning the need to ensure a stronger international human rights framework to guide the policies and behavior of governments when confronted by peaceful protests to ensure conformity with human rights standards. There is a clear need to translate rights standards into policy and law throughout the world. We urge this Council to begin to seriously address this critical need within the upcoming Resolution on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests.

Thank you Mr. President