



August 27, 2013

Dr. Nabil Fahmy

Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Dear Mr. Foreign Minister,

For decades, the Egyptian people have suffered due to the absence of the rule of law and respect for human rights. As a result, they took to the street twice in less than three years to give voice to their aspirations and ambitions: the first time on January 25, 2011, demanding bread, freedom, and social justice, and the second on June 30, 2013, when the governing administration failed to meet these demands. In both cases, Egyptians rose up in public streets and squares to reject the state's violations of human rights, which did not disappear after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak and the symbols of his regime and continue now even after the removal of Mohamed Morsi.

Egypt currently faces grave challenges, among them difficulties to entrenching the rule of law, the perils of civil strife, and violations of the right to life and peaceful assembly. This situation requires a thorough change of Egypt's policies of engagement with human rights issues to inaugurate genuine transparency and partnership with independent human rights organizations. In this regard, we suggest that the Foreign Ministry take several necessary measures to strengthen human rights protections, including:

1. Sign and ratify international human rights conventions:

- Sign the optional protocol of the Convention against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and declare Egypt's commitment to Articles 21 and 22 of the convention;
- Sign the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Sign the optional protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Sign the optional protocol of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights;
- Ratify to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court;
- Sign the optional protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Withdraw the reservations to Articles 2, 16, and 29 of the CEDAW;
- Sign the protocol on women's rights of the African Charter for Human and

Peoples' Rights;

- Sign the third optional protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
 - Withdraw the reservations to Articles 12(1), 20, 22(1), 23, and 24 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees;
 - Sign the optional protocol of the African Charter for Human and Peoples' Rights establishing the African Court for Human and Peoples' Rights.
2. Approve the opening of a regional bureau of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Egypt, as was promised by the Egyptian government to the OHCHR two and a half years ago, and grant the necessary visas to the delegation of the OHCHR to visit Egypt, as the visa applications were filed a month ago.
 3. Undertake a wholesale review of Egypt's foreign policy in relation to human rights and cease to adopt positions of solidarity, within the UN or outside of it, with states that commit human rights crimes to protect them from accountability.
 4. Cooperate fully with UN human rights procedures, including by approving requests to visit Egypt filed by several special rapporteurs and working groups on various rights and liberties. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry should issue an open invitation to UN special rapporteurs to visit Egypt, as Tunisia did in 2011. The government should also submit its reports to convention bodies at the proper time, rather than postponing them for years, and prepare them with seriousness and responsibility, taking care to respond to questions and observations repeatedly noted by UN bodies and experts over the course of several decades. Relevant government reports should be put up for a broad societal debate involving various representative bodies, political parties, professional syndicates, and human rights organizations, with the goal of drafting a national plan to promote and advance human rights.
 5. Develop the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's policies and philosophy toward international human rights organizations, strengthen cooperation with them both within the framework of UN agencies and outside of them, approve the registration of international organizations seeking to operate in Egypt, facilitate their role and refrain from interfering in their work.
 6. Take action to implement the recommendations given to Egypt in the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review of 2010, in conjunction with the competent bodies and authorities, extend partnerships with independent human rights organizations, and prepare Egypt's 2014 UPR report.
 7. Reconsider the memorandum submitted by the Foreign Ministry on August 14, 2013 to the committee tasked with writing a new NGO law, as this memo adopted the same restrictive mindset which contradicts international standards and was adopted by the Foreign Ministry prior to June 30, 2013.

As we propose these brief recommendations, we note that we would be very pleased to engage in institutional dialogue with the Foreign Ministry about ways to implement said recommendations. We invite you to discuss Egyptian foreign policy as it relates to human rights in a meeting with human rights organizations at the office of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

Respectfully,

Bahey eldin Hassan

Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies