

46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

General Debate Item 4: Human Rights Situations that require the Council's attention

Joint Statement on Egypt

12 March 2021

Statement by Finland on behalf of a group of countries

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Kirsti Kauppi, Finland

Thank you Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 31¹ countries.

We remain deeply concerned about the trajectory of human rights in Egypt and share the concerns expressed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Procedure mandate holders.

We draw particular attention to restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, the constrained space for civil society and political opposition, and the application of terrorism legislation against peaceful critics.

We recognize the new NGO Law that establishes a new legal framework more favorable for the operation of civil society organizations. It is crucial that the Law will be used to empower civil society actors working in all fields.

We urge Egypt to guarantee space for civil society – including human rights defenders – to work without fear of intimidation, harassment, arrest, detention or any other form of reprisal. That includes lifting travel bans and asset freezes against human rights defenders – including EIPR staff.

We call on Egypt to lift restrictions on media and digital freedom and to end the practice of blocking the websites of independent media outlets, and to release all journalists who have been arrested in the course of practicing their profession.

We recognise Egypt's role in supporting regional stability, managing migration, fighting against terrorism, and recall the need to counter terrorism in full respect of international human rights law.

However, we are deeply concerned about the application of terrorism legislation against human rights activists, LGBTI persons, journalists, politicians and lawyers. We urge Egypt to

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, North Macedonia, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America

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. We also ask Egypt to cease the use of the terrorism entities list to punish individuals for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

We also express concern at multiple abuses of due process, including limitations on lawyers seeing evidence or accessing their client. We call for accountability and immediate end of impunity.

We call for Egypt to constructively engage with the Office of the High Commissioner, and to fully cooperate with Special Procedures mandates.

We stand ready to work with Egypt to this end.

Thank you Madame President.