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## Views: Defending Human Rights in Egypt in a Time of Crisis

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## **Views: Defending Human Rights in Egypt in a Time of Crisis**

Moataz Elfegiery

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This paper aims to describe and analyze how Egyptian human rights organizations have worked under a closed, authoritarian political system for the past five years. It posits that despite the qualitative and quantitative impact of the unprecedented security crackdown on human rights defenders and independent organizations and its effect on human rights work and activity in Egypt, parts of the movement have managed to develop strategies and tactics to meet the challenges posed by the current crisis.

These strategies and tactics will be identified and discussed while exploring opportunities for those involved in the movement to move further in this direction and mitigate the catastrophic consequences of the growing human rights crisis in the country. Here, rights defenders can learn from the experiences of human rights activists who also labored under a closed public and political sphere in other authoritarian states.

The paper begins by analyzing the security strictures on the Egyptian human rights movement and their repercussions on the work of these organizations. It then looks at the responses and adaptations of the rights movement to the current human rights crisis. In doing so, it will consider these responses in terms of their political and security costs and in light of the challenges facing the rights movement. These challenges include consistency in the defense of human rights, internal divisions within the movement, the sharp polarization of Egyptian society in the wake of the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power, and the subsequent swift return of authoritarianism and growing control and infiltration of the security apparatus in various spheres of public action.

There are also signs that the resurgent authoritarian state seeks to threaten the cohesion of the human rights movement and cripple its ability to develop a common political understanding of the crisis and a response to it, or even sustain its local coordinating frameworks. The paper then turns to the debate over the role of human rights activists in Egypt and abroad, seeking to understand the current situation and the advantages of complementarity and a division of domestic and foreign roles. Finally, the paper discusses the responsibility of the human rights movement and its members for proposing alternatives and fostering mutual understandings to cope with the current crisis.

These themes were chosen for discussion in light of human rights organizations' engagement with the political challenges in Egypt. The unprecedented wave of repression targeting rights organizations and their staff has forced a discussion and debate about the movement's resilience

and by what means to sustain it. At the same time, the number of Egyptian activists who have left the country has fueled another debate—a novel one, for the Egyptian rights movement—about the potential role of activists abroad and the possible benefits of a division of labor between activists at home and those abroad.

Finally, the current human rights crisis in Egypt has brought with it new roles and tasks for rights defenders, making it incumbent on them to posit alternatives and build mutual understanding to overcome the crisis. These roles have begun to take shape but they still need to be better framed and developed. The analysis in this paper relies on the close observation of the activities and output of human rights groups and rights defenders in Egypt as well as my own direct practical experience as a person involved in this movement for the past two decades. This experience has allowed me to directly engage and meet with many activists inside and outside of Egypt.

### **Nature and motives of the security crackdown on the human rights movement**

Since 2014, the defense of human rights, by both individuals and institutions, has been increasingly targeted.<sup>1</sup> On the judicial front, criminal investigations were launched in the biggest case ever, targeting leaders and members of more than 37 rights organizations, including the most independent and active groups in the country. They have been charged with receiving foreign funds without state approval and operating without a license, as well as harming national security and engaging in espionage with foreign bodies. In connection with the case, dozens of prominent human rights defenders have been banned from travel, and in many instances, their personal and institutional assets have been frozen.<sup>2</sup>

On the legislative front, additional restrictions have been imposed on the operation of NGOs<sup>3</sup> and harsher penalties instituted for the receipt of foreign funds.<sup>4</sup> Scores of activists, journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, and others interested in the defense of human rights have been arbitrarily arrested, detained for prolonged periods, and prosecuted in politically motivated trials. The campaign against rights defenders has escalated to include direct death threats against some of them, inside and outside of Egypt, and surveillance of their activities, movements, and communications at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup>

The security and judicial crackdown on human rights workers has gained steam over the past four years. Events indicate that the containment of the rights movement was part of a counterrevolutionary strategy by the security apparatus, particularly the military establishment and its intelligence agencies, which form the nucleus of the so-called deep state<sup>6</sup> put in place in the months after the removal of President Hosni Mubarak. These forces engineered the legislative, constitutional, and political frameworks of the transitional period to allow the gradual thwarting of democratization and ensure their return to power. This is in fact what happened after the removal of President Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood on July 3, 2013.

These anti-revolutionary powers first initiated prosecutions, criminal investigations, and smear campaigns in the second half of 2011. The first phase focused on international rights organizations working in Egypt and culminated in June 2013 with prison sentences of one–five years for 43

Egyptians and non-nationals working in these organizations, following their conviction on charges of providing illicit foreign funds and operating without a permit.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the democratic transition in Tunisia, which was inaugurated with a new statute guaranteeing freedom of association, attempts to reform and liberalize the statutory framework governing the operation of Egyptian and foreign NGOs in Egypt were unsuccessful in the transitional period following Mubarak's removal in February 2011 and up to the ousting of Morsi in June 2013. The failure of the first parliament and the first post-revolution elected executive to pass a more liberal framework for NGO work is attributable to the compatibility of the deep state's agenda to isolate the rights movement with the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood as they ruled the country.<sup>8</sup>

The systematic assault on the human rights movement indicated that the deep state was aware of the movement's role in laying the groundwork for the popular movement of January 2011 through years of diligent work, especially in the first decade of the millennium when it expanded its local and international outreach, documentation, and legal activities in qualitative and quantitative ways. The movement attracted young generations representing an array of professional, social, and ideological backgrounds, some of whom went on to play leading roles in political and protest movements. This was not lost on the security establishment. In February 2011, security forces stormed the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and arrested many of the center's leaders and staff, including the late highly esteemed lawyer Ahmed Seif al-Islam. The raid was carried out by military intelligence, under the direct supervision of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, now president of Egypt and then the head of military intelligence. The center was targeted for its efforts to document state violations and crimes against protestors during the January revolution and provide legal assistance to detainees.

In the wake of the 2011 revolution, human rights organizations continued to expose and condemn ongoing human rights crimes and violations, and attempts by counterrevolutionary forces to undermine the democratic transition, until Abdel Fattah al-Sisi assumed the reins of power in June 2014. This provided yet another motivation for the military and security establishments to make the strategic decision to quash independent rights activity in the country and restructure the rights landscape to control output. This restructuring was achieved by facilitating the establishment of a new sector of rights organizations that support and justify state discourse. Since 2014, the suppression of rights advocacy has been part of a general trend of systematic, preventive measures taken by the Sisi regime in political, media, civic, and labor spheres; designed to crush and abort any new popular movement and eliminate any potential opponents of the ascendant regime.<sup>9</sup>

### **Repercussions of the security crackdown on rights activity**

Judicial and security measures taken against human rights organizations have taken a heavy toll on the quantity and quality of their activity in Egypt. Some organizations have responded to the situation by trying to adapt to security and legislative changes, devising tactics to protect the institution and its staff, and assigning different roles to members in Egypt and abroad; with the purpose of resisting and reclaiming a space within the public sphere while also continuing to

provide support for victims and document and expose human rights violations, even if on a smaller scale.<sup>10</sup> Other Egyptian organizations have publicly frozen their activities in full, although their leadership and members maintain a level of unofficial coordination, dialogue, and cooperation with human rights activists in Egypt and abroad. Some organizations that have officially suspended their activities within Egypt have maintained a small work team acting on a consulting basis while moving their activities abroad, which gives them more freedom and independence of action.

Recent years have also seen the establishment of new rights organizations abroad whose members include activists within Egypt. Another small segment of rights organizations has continued to work openly, assuming the substantial risks of this difficult choice. Despite the difficult circumstances of organizations that have chosen the path of resistance, in recent years they have produced a series of important reports and statements on sensitive security and political issues. These issues include the spread of torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing; the expanded use of military trials, and the systematic use of the death penalty in political cases following unfair, political trials.<sup>11</sup> Lawyers with these organizations have continued to offer legal assistance to prisoners of conscience, political prisoners, and victims of torture. They have also pursued litigation through local channels before the Supreme Constitutional Court and the Administrative Court, and occasionally through international channels in cooperation with international rights organizations. The Western media and UN human rights agencies have relied on the data and reports of these organizations to analyze human rights developments under the rule of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.<sup>12</sup>

Measures taken against human rights organizations have made it difficult to coordinate stances and joint activities. Coordination has declined markedly in the past two years. This is partly due to the reluctance of many rights associations to publicly endorse statements and reports that could expose their members to further reprisals and partly due to shifts in the political orientation of some organizations, divergent political readings of events underway in the country, and different stances on the deterioration of human rights in the country. Nevertheless, some rights organizations have preserved some coordination on public stances, particularly as new youth associations with members within and outside of Egypt have joined the movement.

Coordination and communication between rights organizations and leftist or liberal political opposition forces have also declined, particularly since many of these forces have been extremely hesitant about condemning regime practices on several occasions. Nevertheless, such coordination is not completely absent. A few coordinated initiatives have been seen, such as cooperation efforts between some rights defenders and the Civil Democratic Movement,<sup>13</sup> the organization of syndicate activities in support of civil liberties, along with the occasional issuance of joint statements.

Current political constraints in Egypt have led a small number of rights organizations to defend another path of accommodation. Not only have they drastically curtailed activities and changed their nature, but they have also avoided activities that may bring them into conflict with the regime and at times have altered their political discourse to preserve lines of communication with state political and security bodies. These organizations have officially registered under the new

restrictive law regulating civic associations in the belief that it will give them some ability to survive, protect their members from judicial actions associated with the case no. 173 on foreign funding, and allow them to contribute, even on a limited basis, to state public policies.

Meanwhile, local and international activities by NGOs that back and justify state practices have flourished. This type of organization began appearing in the last years of President Mubarak's tenure, but they have proliferated and thrived under the Sisi regime, attracting new funds from states allied with the Sisi government, such as the UAE. The state has exploited these organizations and given their leaders ample media and public space to smear independent rights organizations and justify crimes by security forces, such as those committed during the dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in of August 2013 or enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing.

Generally, funding for human rights activity has declined due to tighter security and legal restrictions on foreign funding for rights organizations. Organizations that registered under the NGO law have fared no better, as the administrative bodies typically reject funding agreements between them and donors. Funds are also scarcer because many donor bodies are reluctant in light of the risks of operating in Egypt in the current climate, particularly due to the increased smear campaigns and incitement against some prominent donors. Some donors have changed their priorities and focus on emergency, ad-hoc support for rights organizations or protection and legal support programs for human rights defenders. Other donors, most significantly the EU, have aligned themselves with the new political realities in Egypt, prioritizing non-political, non-controversial activities and increasing support for associations with a pro-regime agenda.

### **Adaptation trends and the cost of rights work**

When the Egyptian authorities or any authoritarian regime seek to neutralize human rights organizations—which is the current choice of the Egyptian regime—the principal target is the rights movement's activities and ability to organize, whether at home or abroad. The last few years have demonstrated that when it comes repression, the Egyptian authorities do not distinguish between moderate and radical forces. All critical voices have been targeted; even those associations registered under the draconian NGO law have not escaped restrictions on their funding, activity, and internal administration. An accommodation strategy of avoiding critical engagement with the regime's deplorable human rights record and attempting to build bridges with the ruling authorities, even at the expense of the rights mission on which these organizations are based, does not necessarily guarantee protection and lower the costs of such work. However, such a strategy does carry profound, long-term institutional risks for the rights movement, which could in turn damage the cohesion and growth of the movement and deter the attraction and development of cadres.

The founders of the Egyptian human rights movement in the 1980s and 90s also faced repression and security harassment, which reached a crescendo from 1986 to 1990 when Zaki Badr, known for his severe hostility to human rights activists and the political opposition, served as interior minister.<sup>14</sup> The rights movement and its members also faced risks and threats from

religious extremists in the 1990s because of their critique of religious violence, their defense of the freedom of religion and belief and minority rights, and their embrace of reformist Islamist thinkers. The fact that human rights activists continued to work in this period and adopted various tactics—including the active use of their relationship with international rights organizations and the foreign media—helped to ensure the survival and growth of the movement and attract new generations. If the movement had then chosen to suspend activities and accommodate themselves to circumstances, it would not have developed into what it was at the beginning of the current century.

Rights work under authoritarian regimes that do not accept the principle of free association or freedom of opinion and expression is not without cost. This cost cannot be wholly avoided except by completely halting activities or fully aligning with the despotic authorities. The cost may be mitigated, however, by measures to provide security for human rights workers. By the same token, choosing the path of resistance has not stopped rights organizations from taking the initiative and demonstrating their readiness to talk with the authorities to resolve the conflict between the state and the rights movement, without abandoning their critical, principled stances on the practices and crimes of the regime.

### **The challenge of consistency and the risks of the political exploitation of movement divisions**

Consistency in the defense of human rights was a challenge faced by the first generation of the Egyptian human rights movement in the 1980s and 90s. Consistency here means the principled defense of all victims regardless of political orientation, without bias or selectivity. The consistent defense of human rights is therefore not a new issue for the human rights movement in Egypt. Different stances on defending Islamists was one challenge that threatened the cohesion of the rights movement in its early years, but the founding organizations managed to overcome this division, ultimately championing a consistent critique of crimes committed against citizens regardless of their ideological and political orientation.

The movement also encountered the same problem in other controversial cases, such as the defense of LGBT rights, freedom of belief, and gender equality. The movement took time to narrow the differences among members on these issues. It was aided in this task by the involvement of new generations of rights defenders, growing interactions with global civil society, and engagement with international human rights instruments. It was also aided by the increasing role played by marginalized groups such as women, religious minorities, and the LGBT community in defense of their rights and their advocacy of their own agenda in civil society.

Selectivity was also apparent in the human rights activities of Islamists. Rights groups formed by the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, defended the group's prisoners and promoted the Brotherhood's ideological agenda, which was diametrically opposed to provisions in international human rights conventions related to women's rights, the rights of religious minorities, and freedom of belief.

The consistent defense of human rights again became a salient issue as the political landscape shifted following the ouster of President Mohammed Morsi. The first cracks came when the movement was faced with the crimes committed by the state against Morsi's supporters and Muslim Brothers. Although some institutions did not address regime crimes at that time, either seeking to settle scores with political Islamist forces or due to weak professionalism, most in the Egyptian rights movement maintained their balance: they had opposed human rights violations under Brotherhood rule and then opposed army and police crimes after Morsi's fall. This only fueled the anger of the new regime and whetted its desire for revenge.

The second division came later, when it was time to assess the political landscape and define priorities. While such conflicts are legitimate and even inevitable in civil society and rights movements, when they are not contained, they can be exploited politically by state security institutions to divide and weaken the movement or even cause a fundamental perversion of their value system. An organized dialogue among human rights organizations in the framework of coordinating structures can act as a firewall against such divisions and provide the structure to build consensus among them and analyze political shifts and the conduct of political actors. This kind of effort was successfully made by Egyptian organizations before and after the January revolution within the framework of the Forum for Independent Human Rights Organizations. That forum midwived a long series of common stances and actions that magnified the influence of the rights movement and allowed it to avoid potential divisions.

### **Roles at home and abroad in the Egyptian context**

It is common under authoritarian rule for many activists to reside outside the country, either because they were forced abroad by prosecution or security threats or chose to leave due to the difficulties of working within the country. Numerous variables must be considered before surrendering to a categorical division between activists at home and activists in exile. Indeed, there are strategies to avoid such polarity, which often undermines the opportunities to change and influence human rights policies at home.

At the same time, the choice of some organizations to move their activities abroad or the establishment of new organizations abroad should not necessarily be seen as a way of escaping local repression. Likewise, staying in the country does not necessarily reflect the choice to resist and pay the price; at times, some may succumb to security pressures to change their strategies in a way that undermines a consistent human rights discourse and promotes an accommodation with the regime. This in turn severely erodes the cohesion and credibility of the human rights movement. Recent years have shown that the extension of some rights organizations abroad was a preventive tactic and resistance strategy designed to reclaim public space, particularly as these organizations have continued to attract members and cadres within the country.

In the Egyptian context, there has been no break in communication or segregation within the rights movement inside and outside of the country, as has been the case in other authoritarian contexts. Most rights organizations that moved their operations abroad did so as part of a

preventive strategy to resist and survive, to facilitate their work and administration, though they continue to maintain a human field presence in Egypt in different forms.

In addition, some new organizations and coalitions recently launched abroad, which have undertaken concrete activities and actions, are the product of an agreement and joint action between a team with a presence within and outside of Egypt. Since 2015, international and regional organizations and networks have also facilitated coordinated activities related to the human rights crisis in Egypt, both within and outside of Egypt. The continuity of the Egyptian rights movement can be explained by the institutional and professional development and dynamism of the movement in the previous three decades, as well as by the choices and roles played by the relevant actors and international and regional organizations.

Many young people who have been forced to leave the country belong to the generation that came of age with the protests of the January revolution, and these young people still have the persistence and desire to carry on their work for political change in Egypt. Many of them maintain a broad network of relationships with their peers in Egypt and are in constant contact with their civic and social organizational structures. Settling their legal residency outside of Egypt remains one of the primary challenges these young activists face—a challenge not faced by previous generations of exiled activists coming from Eastern Europe or Latin America, who were welcomed by Western states and given substantial support to continue their political and rights activities. Perhaps it is the duty of the human rights movement at this stage to develop the tools allowing it to maintain contact and coordination between activists in Egypt and abroad, and to continue to use those abroad as fuel for change. This would serve to preserve the movement as a whole and avoid the break seen in other national contexts when authoritarian regimes endure.

In this context, lessons can be learned from the struggle of the human rights movement in Chile under General Augusto Pinochet, who ruled from 1973 to 1990. The division of labor between activists in Chile and abroad was crucial to publicizing human rights issues under Pinochet and later in promoting democratization. A great many political and rights activists were forced into exile, but many of them adopted long-term strategies to support their colleagues in the country and expose Pinochet's crimes to the rest of the world. The life of Chilean lawyer and rights activist José Zalaquett,<sup>15</sup> who held numerous positions in international rights organizations in the 1970s and 80s, can be a model for Egyptian rights activists abroad.

Zalaquett and his colleagues brought global attention to the deterioration of human rights in Chile through effective action within international rights institutions, the establishment of international solidarity platforms with human rights activists in Chile, and their constant engagement with judicial and quasi-judicial human rights instruments to foreground issues such as enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, and torture, which were widespread under Pinochet. This would not have been possible without coordination and interaction between activists within and outside of Chile.<sup>16</sup>

In Tunisia, we have the example of the Committee for the Respect of Human Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia and its efforts in the 2000s to mobilize Tunisian activists and international and labor organizations in Europe to pressure the Tunisian government. The political efforts and

struggle of exiled Tunisian rights activist Kamel Jendoubi<sup>17</sup>—a founder and the first president of the Committee for the Respect of Human Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia and the president of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, one of the most important international rights bodies—is comparable to Zalaquett. He too offers an example of the influence that exiled activists can have on human rights policies at home under authoritarian regimes.

### **The crisis and the political and moral responsibility of human rights activists**

In some comparable cases, human rights movements operating in authoritarian contexts or sharply polarized societies have gone beyond their conventional, technocratic role of resisting human rights violations and crimes to posit alternatives and take up what one prominent rights activist and author called “the political and moral responsibility of civil society.” This vision sees civil society organizations as “agents of reform and levers of state and social progress.”<sup>18</sup> In this role, the rights movement contributes to efforts to overcome social divisions and build consensus that can contribute to the process of democratization. This does not mean burdening what remains of the human rights movement in Egypt with the security and political responsibility of assuming this task. In fact, in many comparable cases, this political responsibility fell to activists abroad, who played a principal role in coordinating and cooperating with activists at home without exposing them to an additional security cost.

For example, in the case of Chile, a series of dialogues were held between political factions and rights groups in exile. This facilitated the process of mobilization against the Pinochet regime, the unification of forces to oppose and bring it down, and the beginning of democratization in the country.<sup>19</sup> The last years of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s rule in Tunisia saw a similar series of talks and understandings between opposition political forces abroad that brought together the Islamist Ennahda movement and human rights activists. These resulted in the establishment of the October 18 Coalition for Rights and Freedoms,<sup>20</sup> which paved the way for the Tunisian revolution. The understandings reached in these talks also helped to unify viewpoints among political factions when setting priorities and managing issues during the 2011 transitions.<sup>21</sup> Within the framework of the body, forums were established to discuss contentious issues, particularly between Islamists and secularists. The body ultimately issued a series of declarations about women’s rights, gender equality, and the relationship between religion and state.

### **Conclusion**

Maintaining the existence, growth, and functions of the human rights movement, as well as its values and mission, in a period witnessing unprecedented levels of repression requires novel adaptive methods. The goal of these adaptive methods must be to sustain the resistance to reclaim the public arena, and to overcome the current crisis through innovative thinking about the roles and responsibilities of the human rights movement. Current circumstances also dictate a new

understanding of the relationship and roles of activists within Egypt and outside of it, without reducing this to the binary choice of home or abroad, staying or leaving.

Fighting to improve human rights in society is a long, cumulative process; the results of which cannot be evaluated in the short term. Increased repression and the ability of the authoritarian regime to build legitimacy on the international stage could lead some to moderate the aspirations of the movement. It may lead others to suspend activities and shift goals and agendas, because they believe chances for success in such a closed climate are slim, and the cost is too high. Regardless of the merit and legitimacy of these choices, they could erode the potential of the human rights movement and its capacity to assume its historic responsibility to confront human rights crises. It could even lead to the complete neutralization of the movement by the regime.

The alternative is to believe in the cumulative nature of the work of human rights organizations and the importance of continuing the struggle in the long term. The case of Egyptian rights groups, from their beginnings in the 1980s, are the best evidence of this cumulative experience. Over years of documentation and cooperation with international and regional human rights instruments, the movement succeeded in raising social awareness of important rights issues such as torture, the danger of the emergency law, and the importance of freedom of belief, freedom of opinion and expression, and social and economic rights. This cumulative experience, which drew new generations into civil society, broadened the horizon for mobilization around rights issues and thereby paved the way for the January 2011 revolution.

In the past few years and despite the waves of repression, human rights groups have won small, though significant, victories through litigation, lobbying for the release of prisoners of conscience or reduced pressure on some political prisoners, and ongoing efforts toward documentation and information gathering. Youth networks have been created focusing on specific issues like enforced disappearance, the death penalty, or press freedom. Some rights institutions have also initiated efforts, though still embryonic, to pose alternatives and hammer out the compromises necessary to confront the human rights crisis.

## About the Author

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on state actions taken, see Saskia Brechenmacher (2017), *Civil Society Under Assault*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Amr Hamzawy (2017), “Egypt’s Resilient and Evolving Social Activism,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>2</sup> Elissa Miller and Margaret Suter (2016), “Case No. 173: The State of Egypt’s NGOs,” The Atlantic Council, and <https://goo.gl/GYwbev>

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch (2017), “Egypt: New Law Will Crush Civil Society,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/02/egypt-new-law-will-crush-civil-society>.

<sup>4</sup> Mada Masr (2014), “President Amends Law to Include Life Sentence for Receiving Funds, Arms,” <https://madasr.com/en/2014/09/23/news/u/president-amends-law-to-include-life-sentence-for-receiving-funds-arms>

<sup>5</sup> See statements from Front Line Defenders on the status of human rights defenders in Egypt, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/location/egypt>

<sup>6</sup> On the concept of the deep state in the context of Arab Spring revolutions, see Jean-Pierre Filiu (2015), *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and Its Jihadi Legacy*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch (2013), “Egypt: Unjust Verdict in Rights Workers’ Trial,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/04/egypt-unjust-verdict-rights-workers-trial>

<sup>8</sup> Heba Morayef (2013), “Uncivil Society: Why Egypt’s New Law Regulating NGOs Is Still Criminal,” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/11/uncivil-society/#.Ubc34aUQm8p.twitter>. Also note that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party supported the sentence given to 43 workers with foreign rights organizations. For information on the Brotherhood’s stance on this case and the reform of the NGO law, see Moataz El Fegier (2016), *Islamic Law and Human Rights: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<sup>9</sup> See Amr Hamzawy (2017), “Legislating Authoritarianism: Egypt’s New Era of Repression,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,

[https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP\\_302\\_Hamzawy\\_Authoritarianism\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_302_Hamzawy_Authoritarianism_Final_Web.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mohamed Zaree, the director of the Egypt office of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Sep. 2017, <https://goo.gl/4N69KY>

see also Ahmed Atallah’s article on the rights movement in Egypt, 2017, <https://goo.gl/ZNsWzd>

<sup>11</sup> See the reports and statements pertinent to these issues issued by the Egyptian Commission on Rights and Freedoms, Nadeem Center to Combat Violence and Torture, Adala Center for Rights and Freedoms, Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Biladi Center for Rights and Freedoms, Committee for Justice, Egyptian Coordinating Body for Rights and Freedoms, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Jackson Diehl (2017), “What Trump should ask a brutal dictator as he welcomes him to the White House,” Washington Post, <https://goo.gl/m3BMVz>, and Declan Walsh (2018), “Despite Egypt’s Dismal Human Rights Record, U.S. Restores Military Aid,” New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/26/world/middleeast/egypt-human-rights-us-aid.html>

<sup>13</sup> The Civil Democratic Movement was founded in December 2017 and includes the Destour Party, Karama Party, Popular Democratic Alliance Party, Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Reform and Development, and Bread and Freedom Party. Some 150 public and political figures, including human rights defenders, signed its founding statement.

<sup>14</sup> For example, several rights activists, among them the late Dr. Mohamed Sayyed Said, a founder of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, and lawyers Hisham Mubarak and Amir Salem were severely tortured in 1989 for their solidarity with a strike by steelworkers.

<sup>15</sup> Zalaquett was the head of the international executive committee of Amnesty International from 1979 to 1982. He returned to Chile in 1986 and in 1990 was appointed head of the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation by Chile’s first elected president after Pinochet.

<sup>16</sup> See Jessica Stites Mor (2013), *Human Rights and Transnational Solidarity in Cold War Latin America*, University of Wisconsin Press, and Kathryn Sikkink and Margaret Keck (1998), *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Cornell University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Jendoubi headed the first independent commission overseeing public elections after the fall of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia and was appointed the first minister of state for civil society.

<sup>18</sup> See Bahey eldin Hassan, “The Chemical Autumn of the Arab Region and the Political Responsibility of Civil Society,” introduction to the annual report on human rights in the Arab region for 2017–18, *The Militarization of Politics and an Authoritarian Revival*, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, <https://cihrs.org/arab-region-annual-report-2017-2018/?lang=en#chemical>

<sup>19</sup> See Patrick William Kelly (2013), “The 1973 Chilean Coup and the Origins of Transnational Human Rights Activism,” *Journal of Global History* 8(1), pp. 165–86.

<sup>20</sup> The October 18 Coalition was a coordinating framework that sought to initiate a dialogue on “the conditions for democratic accord and agreement on a minimum threshold of freedoms.” It was founded in December 2005 and included Tunisian opposition parties and rights institutions. The coalition was created following a series of dialogues between Tunisian groups in and out of the country. For more information on the Tunisian experience, see the paper issued by the Arab Reform Initiative, <https://www.arab-reform.net/ar/node/350>; see also the report issued by the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy on the founding of the coalition, <http://www.csidtunisia.org/en/?p=472>.

<sup>21</sup> See Alfred Stepan (2011), “Tunisia’s Transition and the Twin Tolerations,” *Journal of Democracy* 23(2), pp. 89–103.