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Mr. Antonio Tajani  
President of the European Parliament

Mr. Donald Tusk  
President of the European Council

Ms. Federica Mogherini  
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

2 March 2017

**Subject: Egyptian FM Shoukry at Foreign Affairs Council—call to prioritise human rights issues on March 6**

We call on you to focus discussions with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry on urgent human rights and political issues in Egypt, during the Foreign Affairs Council's 6 March, 2017 lunch debate with him.

We must voice once again, our increasing alarm at **Egypt's escalating repression and silencing of civil society organisations (CSOs), including prominent Egyptian human rights defenders (HRDs)—at the very same time as the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities negotiations were finalised, opening the door to increased cooperation and ultimately, the possibility of resuming direct EU budget support to Egypt.** This clampdown accelerated dramatically in 2016 and early 2017, with asset freezes against 7 Egyptian rights organisations and 10 HRDs; at least 17 HRDs have received travel bans within case 173/2011—in which hundreds of them may incur life sentences for receipt of unauthorised foreign funding, including from the EU Delegation to Egypt. Egypt's President could still receive and choose to ratify the draconian NGO law adopted by Parliament in 2016, that would put an end to independent civil society altogether.

On 9 February 2017, a **precedent was set as the Egyptian authorities shuttered an anti-torture NGO, El-Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence**, enforcing an apparently groundless year-old closure order, subject to an ongoing appeal procedure, and condemned by the EP's 2016 urgency resolution. El-Nadeem's founders—Aida Seif al-Dawla, Magda Adly and Suzan Fayyad—are among **Egypt's women HRDs specifically targeted within this crackdown**, along with Mozn Hassan, and prominent lawyer Azza Soliman whose December 2016 arrest ordered by the foreign funding case investigation judge, crossed another line.

We urge you to emphasise to Minister Shoukry that the EU and member states' concern about migration and counterterrorism does not negate our position on the importance of CSOs and HRDs' **freedom to conduct their legitimate work**, to ensure the country's stability and combat extremist ideas. It must be clear that **we view the rule of law and the presence of a vital and independent civil society, able to ensure oversight, as indispensable for any policy on migration, security and counter-terrorism to be implementable at all.**

Finally, **we call on you to prioritise discussion with Minister Shoukry, of the urgent need for the Government of Egypt to address its ongoing human rights crisis**, in particular widespread enforced disappearances, torture and deaths in detention, as well as the failure to protect the Coptic Christian community, and high prevalence of gender-based violence. The closure of the public sphere through repression of media workers and the 1914 Assembly Law—repealed by the Egyptian Parliament in 1928 yet still implemented by the current authorities—which ban peaceful gatherings and allow for long and arbitrary detentions, must be raised. The impact of such dangerous policies is alarming: they ban peaceful expressions of popular grievances and political dissent, marginalise youth and maintain a favourable environment for radicalisation and violent extremism. This prevents any stabilisation of Egypt, which we are powerless to foster through sectoral cooperation alone.

Therefore, **we renew our call not to fully normalise relations with Egypt, given its human rights and political situation, and the continuous avoidance of truth and justice for Giulio Regeni**, shown by a year of false leads and cover-ups. Just as no convenient half-truths will satisfy us on this case, no cosmetic changes could mask Egypt's policy of mass repression, closing the public sphere and silencing its human rights movement.



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