

Concluding Communiqué of the London Forum on the Future of Egypt



The organisations that are signatory to this plea express their worries and deep sorrow for the fate of the human rights in Egypt post the introduction of a bundle of legal and constitutional changes put forward by the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). These changes were passed in a referendum in which only 8% of the electoral votes made it to the ballot box¹ according to confirmation given by all monitors including judges² in a stark contradiction to the regime claims of unprecedented turn out, the latest of a string of ballot rigging and results' falsification of elections and referenda over the past decades in an atmosphere that is far from being fair and transparent.

The institutions and organisations, signatory to this plea, refer to the unanimous agreement of the findings of all local and international establishments that are concerned with the human rights in Egypt and who monitored the Egyptian Government continual shunning of the legal and constitutional principles that have been the basis of common legislations: that clearly, signify the paramount importance of the human aspect for all individuals without any discrimination; limit the role of the state to the running of the affairs of the society and to looking after the interests of its citizens in a way where its governance does not breach their internationally recognised basic rights, to observing the laws and the constitution by facilitating the means by which public can participate in the various fields of national patriotic services including politics and to guaranteeing the freedom of expression as an intrinsic right for every individual. These principles that are embodied in articles 41, 44 and 45 of the constitutions, in addition to four other international conventions where Egypt is a signatory to and consequently obliged to abide by, were completely eclipsed and rendered obsolete by the new articles 37, 56, 76 and 179 which clearly states that the president has the right to refer any of the terrorist crime cases to any judiciary he chooses.

At the end of this conference the undersigned organisations would like to point out the following:

1¹ they feel worried due to the acceptance of Egypt to the membership of the United Nations Council for Human

Rights which merely came about because of political accords and mutual exchange of votes amongst the member states and not in accordance with its human rights records especially in the light of the latest violations and breaches of the legal and constitutional rights committed by its government over the years. This would undoubtedly open the door for casting doubts over the credibility of this international council and consequently tarnishing its image.

- 2- The continuation of the phenomena of falsification of the will of the electorates by ballot rigging, forging and counterfeiting of the election and referendum results which nullifies the legitimacy of the balloted legal and constitutional clauses especially those denigrating the respect and protection of human rights that can never be cancelled or even touched even with a majority voting.
- 3- the ongoing phenomena of mounting pressure exerted over the judiciary, the continual interference with its independence from the executive apparatus and the indecisiveness in stopping and taking actions against those amongst the police forces who inflicted bodily harm on some of the judges due to their independent stance which is not compatible with the government political guidelines. This is in addition to the increasing use of referral of civilians to military tribunals.
- 4- The continual use of the Martial-emergency- law since 1981 and its recent substitution by new legislations would only consolidate the current system of human right abuses and breaches against civil liberties as well as rendering a false legitimacy over the use of this law.
- 5- The continual retention of the draconian punishment measures that aim to diminish the freedom of speech and expression especially in the publishing cases by which; the broadcaster Hoyaida Tahah was sentenced to six month imprisonment for preparing a TV documentary programme about torture in Egypt; by which the blogger Abdolkareem Nabil Soliman was sentenced to four years in prison for contempt of religions and for insulting the president; and by which the blogger Abdol-Menim Mahmoud is still in prison because he gave testimony against the unlawful arrests of political opponents and the illegal procedures that are systematically taken against them by the regimes.
- 6- The ever increasing restrictions and financial strangulation of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) especially those working in the field of human rights via; the continual interference of the government into its formations by vetoing some of the people nominated for its board of directors and trustees; blocking any donations to these NGOs; and the refusal of granting permissions to establish new ones.
- 7- The continuation of the restrictions over the formation of new political parties by putting the decision in the hand of a committee affiliated to the ruling party and of which membership is predominantly made up of representatives of the executive apparatus that belong to the party.
- 8- The persistent determination of the regime on the referral of a group of the top ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) to a military tribunal based on a ruling by the State Council Administrative Judicial Court which concurred with another ruling by the same court but by a different circle to rebut the former circle's as it breached the trial proceedings and hence quashing its referral order and rendering it void. The rebuttal of the former circle was due to conflict of interests as its judicial members could not be acting independently while at the same time they are appointed to consultative posts at the various departments of the executive apparatus. This referral is paradoxically taking place despite of four judicial rulings issued by relevant civilian courts for the immediate release of the MB leaders.

Therefore the participants have decided to work in close liaison with the Egyptian NGOs, the Arab and the international organisations in order to shed more light on the status of the human rights and civil liberties in Egypt

and to uncover the dire consequences of its current deterioration. This is to be achieved via; extensive research activities and media coverage and via the formation of an Egyptian–Arabian delegation to follow up the Egyptian file and to present it before the High Commission for Human Rights, the European Commission and the various regional and international judicial organisations.

London: 26th May 2006

Arab Commission
for Human Rights (ACHR),
Rencontre Culturel Euro Arabe
Voix Libre
Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World,
Al Karama
for Human Rights,
Justice International
Observatoire fran aise
des droits de l’Homme
Comit citoyen
d’action civique
Damascus Center for Theoretical Studies and Civil Rights