Stop waging war on 'thoughts' and putting 'affiliation' on trial



he Muslim Brotherhood (MB) condemns the Egyptian Public Prosecution's decision No. 1 of 2026, issued on 9 November 2026, which permanently placed the Muslim Brotherhood on the list of the so¯called "Terrorist Entities", based on politicized and invalid judicial rulings that run counter to the essence of justice and contradict its noble mission.

These invalid rulings represent a desperate attempt to undermine the Brotherhood's ideology – an ideology that ¯embodies the true, moderate message of Islam, as attested to by the (Arab and Muslim) nation's scholars and fair minded historians.

With a political history deeply rooted in Egyptian patriotism, the Muslim Brotherhood maintains a firm conviction that its record is untainted by any suspicion of violence or terrorism – allegations frequently peddled by security apparatuses that exert pressure on the judiciary to issue unjust and invalid rulings. These rulings have led to the inclusion of leftists, liberals, human rights defenders, and public figures on lists of "potential terrorism", thereby violating a fundamental constitutional principle: that the state holds individuals accountable for their actions, not for their thoughts.

The MB also received with deep regret – and unequivocally condemns – the decision by the Cairo Criminal Court's Second Criminal Circuit to designate 35 Islamic entities and organizations, as well as 36 individuals, on the lists of 'terrorist entities' and 'terrorists' for a period of five years, just 24 hours after the permanent designation decision against the Brotherhood was published (2026).

A single decision, issued behind closed doors – with no defendant present, no evidence disclosed, and no defense heard – suddenly brands as "terrorist" organizations that have operated openly for decades across more than 25 European countries. These entities, which are legally regulated and subject to financial audits, serve millions of Muslims from Ukraine in the east to Spain and France in the west, and from Norway in the north to Italy in the south – all condemned with the stroke of a pen.

The decision puts thought, not action, on trial

The fundamental problem with these two decisions lies not merely in their being another link in the Muslim Brotherhood's chain of transnational repression, but in the logic upon which they are based. The second decision was issued just 24 hours after the first, targeting councils for 'fatwa' (religious rulings), imams, family and women's affairs, the holy Quran, and students – as well as cultural centers and mosque associations – across more than 25 European countries. There is no indication that any of these institutions committed a specific act of violence; indeed, international newspapers have pointed out that while the document identifies various entities and individuals, it fails to substantiate the conduct attributed to them. This clearly reveals the political machination that lies behind the decision to issue it.

What these institutions have in common, in the view of those behind the decision, is the moderate form of Islam that Muslims across the globe generally embrace. Conversely, the architects of this decision perceive this moderate ideology as failing to serve their own agenda – an agenda that promotes the submissiveness of Muslims in the face of injustice and the entrenchment of cultural dependency.

When moderate Islamic thought becomes sufficient grounds for being branded as "terrorism" in Egypt, the security apparatus has shifted from criminalizing actions to criminalizing thoughts. This is a dangerous transition, reflecting the continued entanglement of the Egyptian judiciary in political disputes – at a time when Egyptian and international human rights organizations are calling for the removal of such designations pending a comprehensive and transparent review of counter-terrorism legislation. The new decision validates this human rights-based position, as it extends domestic political conflict beyond national borders, targeting millions of Muslims in Europe.

Crime is personal; not to be shared through affiliation

Article 95 of the Egyptian Constitution (2014) stipulates that penalties are personal, and that crimes and penalties may only be based on the law. Article 96 states that an accused person is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a fair court of law, which provides guarantees for him to defend himself. Meanwhile, Article 65 guarantees freedom of thought and opinion. Furthermore, Articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – to which Egypt is a party – mandate the protection of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as freedom of opinion and expression; and Article 22 of the same Covenant protects the right to freedom of association association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

The principle that "criminal liability is personal" means that a judgment rendered against specific individuals – within the context of a particular political dispute, yet cloaked in the guise of judicial and legal process – cannot be extended to everyone who shares their thoughts or ideological framework. Furthermore, it does not permit their actions to be attributed to an institution – whether in Oslo, Madrid, or Kyiv – that has not itself been put on trial and given the opportunity to present a defense.

The Egyptian Court of Cassation itself has established significant precedents in this regard. In 2015, it ruled that the decision to designate 18 MB leaders – based on a verdict in the case known as the "Guidance Bureau Incidents" case – was a legal error and legally void. On 4 July 2018, the Court overturned the designation of the professional football player Mohamed Abu Treika and 1,537 other individuals; and on 13 February 2019, it annulled the designation of 296 individuals in a case where the defendants were accused of forming a "military wing" for the group.

These precedents demonstrate that decisions to include individuals on 'terrorism lists' have frequently been made without sufficient justification linking each person to a specific act, and that the country's highest court has repeatedly rejected this approach.

It is not the state's business to put beliefs on trial

Protection of freedom of thought does not rely on whether that thought is considered "correct" or "moderate" in the eyes of religious or political authorities, as the right to hold an opinion is guaranteed to everyone; consequently, political authorities have no mandate to issue decrees defining which ideas are acceptable and which are criminal. In fact, what the state possesses – and what it is obligated to do – is to prosecute acts that are legally defined as

crimes, based on public evidence, before a natural (competent and impartial) judge who hears both parties and enables the defense to engage in transparent and public deliberation, within a judicial system that is independent of the executive power – a condition that, regrettably, is entirely absent in Egypt today.

The Political Impact of Exporting Hostility

Extension of these lists to include European institutions harms Egypt itself in the first place, even more so than it harms those named on the lists. In fact, it places the Egyptian judiciary in the position of judging citizens of other nations for their opinions, provides a ready-made pretext for hate speech and Islamophobia directed at Muslims in Europe, and leaves Egyptians residing there living in fear of being held accountable for routine associations – such as those with a mosque or a school. Furthermore, this decision does not alter the legal status of these institutions within Europe; it is a domestic legal measure that does not, in itself, result in their inclusion on any official European list.

More dangerously, this approach closes every door to review and national reconciliation, transforming political disagreement into an open-ended, existential war. The experience of removing 716 individuals from the 'terrorist lists' in November 2024 demonstrated that the state – when it chooses to – is well aware that such lists included people who should not have been on them, and that a review is indeed possible.

Putting an end to the cycle of repression

Egypt that is beset by challenges from every direction must – through its wise figures, thinkers, and opinion leaders – seek a way out of the cycle of political retribution that is draining it from within. No one stands to gain from this vicious circle, save for those who wish harm upon the country and its people – a harm that only Allah can avert.

The Muslim Brotherhood calls for amendment of the politicized counter-terrorism laws in Egypt, and for an end to the use of broad, open-ended terms – such as "and its various branches" – in (terrorist) designation decisions, as these violate the principle of fair attribution of offenses and penalties. Furthermore, it urges a comprehensive and transparent review of all terrorist lists, involving independent judicial bodies and civil society organizations.

We also call upon European states to refrain from basing any measures targeting Muslim communities in Europe on the politicized and repressive decisions issued in Egypt, in the absence of an independent verification process that upholds the right to a defense.

We also remind partners in the Egyptian national movement that defending a political opponent's right to justice does not constitute taking their side; rather, it is a defense of a safeguard that every citizen requires. Those who accept today that people may be convicted for their thoughts will find nothing to protect themselves tomorrow, when the thoughts deemed criminal may change.

Allah Is the Greatest, and Praise Be to Allah

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(Tuesday, 7 Jumada al-Akhirah 1448 / 17 November 2026 AD)