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Mr. António Guterres
UN Secretary General
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Room S-3700
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Subject: Your meeting with President Abdelfatah al-Sisi of Egypt

Dear Secretary-General,

As you prepare to meet President Abdelfatah al-Sisi in New York, Amnesty International is writing to ask you to take this opportunity to raise the intensifying human rights crisis in Egypt and to seek tangible commitments from the President towards ending this situation. As the Egyptian authorities have transformed Egypt into an open-air prison by brutally stifling the voices of human rights defenders, the media, and political activists, it is more critical than ever that leaders of the international community send a clear message to Egypt's leadership that they understand the reality of the human rights situation and will not accept it.

In particular, Amnesty International is asking you to draw attention to the following grave concerns: the repression of freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, the use of the death penalty, the use of enforced disappearances, and impunity for security forces.

Dissent stifled

The Egyptian authorities have maintained and intensified the latest crackdown on dissent, which started in December 2017 ahead of the presidential elections. Over the past 10 months, security forces have arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 111 people – a broad range of free and independent voices, including political and media critics and 28 journalists – solely for peacefully expressing critical opinions about the authorities or for calling for or participating in protests or political gatherings. At least 70 of them remain imprisoned, facing charges that carry prison sentences of up to 15 years. The crackdown has also swept up people who participated in small peaceful protests about the rising cost of transportation, people who posted on their Facebook profiles about sexual harassment and people who shared satirical videos, highlighting how risky it is to make even innocuous criticism online or on the streets. Prosecutors are constantly abusing the criminal justice system to target and harass journalists, human rights activists and members of the opposition solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, including through the use of prolonged pre-trial detention.

Silencing human rights activists

Over the past two years, the Egyptian authorities have escalated their efforts to curb the work of human rights activists through case 173, commonly known as the “foreign funding case” and a draconian NGO law. In “case 173”, investigative judges have summoned 68 human rights defenders and NGO staff for interrogation, investigating them "receiving foreign funding to harm national interests" under Article 78 of the penal code, which could carry a sentence of up to 25 years in prison. The judges have also ordered travel bans against 29 human rights defenders and have frozen the assets of 10 individuals and seven NGOs. On 9 February 2017, the Egyptian authorities raided and shut down AI

Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence's headquarters in Cairo. In May last year, the President signed a new draconian NGO law giving the authorities wide powers to deny NGOs registration, dissolve them and subject their staff to criminal prosecution based on vaguely worded provisions.

A surging use of the death penalty

On 8 September, the Cairo Criminal Court today handed down 75 death sentences, 47 life sentences, and heavy prison sentences ranging from 15 to five years to 612 people, in a flagrantly unfair mass trial of over 700 people for participation in the Rabaa sit-in. In contrast, not a single security official has been held to account for the violent police dispersal of the sit-in which killed at least 900 people.

Egyptian authorities have executed at least 127 people since 2013 including at least 31 in relation to incidents of political violence, some of whom were sentenced to death after grossly unfair military trials. Some of those executed were in fact in police custody when the crimes they were accused of were committed.

Enforced disappearance

Since at least 2015, Egypt's National Security Agency (NSA) has relied on the use of enforced disappearance as a tool to extract "confessions", abducting hundreds of people from the streets or their homes without judicial warrant and holding them incommunicado for periods reaching up to seven months, beyond any judicial oversight. Victims include children as young as 14 and as old as 50 years. NSA interrogators have subjected those forcibly disappeared to torture and other ill-treatment to extract "confessions". Methods included severe beatings, electric shocks including on the genitals, suspension in stress positions for long hours and in a few cases, rape. The NSA detained 14-year-old **Aser Mohamed** in January 2016 and subjected him to enforced disappearance for 34 days. He said NSA interrogators forced him to "confess" under torture to terrorism-related charges. His trial is still ongoing.

Amnesty International therefore encourages you to urge President al-Sisi to commit to the following steps:

- **Halt the criminal investigations into case 173/ 2011** against human rights defenders and ensure all charges are dropped and the case is closed;
- **Repeal the NGO law (Law 70/2017 on Associations)** and ensure that any potential replacement is drafted in consultation with civil society organizations and other stakeholders and adheres to Egypt's obligations under international law; and
- **Immediately and unconditionally release all individuals imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing their opinions and journalists** imprisoned for doing their work and drop all charges against them;
- **Establish a moratorium on the death penalty** with the aim to abolish it;
- Ensure that prosecutors promptly and impartially **investigate and prosecute cases of enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions.**

Thank you for your continuing support for the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. Amnesty International thanks you in advance for your efforts on behalf of those affected by serious human rights violations in Egypt.