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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON
THE OCCASION OF THE REVIEW OF EGYPT, 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Thank you Chair,

Honourable Committee members,

Amnesty International's written submission to the Committee enumerates numerous violations of the Covenant by the state party; today I will focus on three key concerns.

Firstly, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and unfair trials.

The Egyptian authorities systematically abuse the criminal justice system and counterterrorism legislation to keep opponents and critics arbitrarily detained indefinitely. Thousands, including human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, opposition politicians, women social media influencers and peaceful protesters, **continue to be arbitrarily detained** for exercising rights protected by articles 19, 21 and 22 of the Covenant, or on the basis of grossly unfair trials, or without legal basis.

Since 2013, thousands have been held in prolonged pretrial detention based on unfounded charges. Thousands of others have been convicted in grossly unfair trials, including by emergency courts, military courts, and terrorism-circuits of regular criminal courts, and sentenced to heavy prison terms or to death. Executions are carried out following grossly unfair trials, marred by reports of enforced disappearances and torture.

Secondly, crackdown on all forms of dissent.

Since 2013, the Egyptian authorities have severely restricted the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The 2018 media and cybercrime laws have enabled the authorities to arbitrarily censor media content, as well as to criminalize the dissemination of information on overly broad grounds. The authorities have blocked at least 600 news', human rights organizations' and other websites. At least 26 journalists remain arbitrarily detained due to their media work and/or expressing critical views of the authorities online. Eleven were arrested in 2022 alone.

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power, **the authorities have sought to control the human rights movement and eradicate the space for independent civil society, including through the enactment of repressive legislation and subjecting civil society workers and opposition politicians to arbitrary detention, unjust prosecution, surveillance, police probation, travel bans, asset freezes and other forms of harassment. Law No. 149/2019 on NGOs and its bylaws allow authorities to unduly restrict the registration, activities, and funding of NGOs, amid threats by the authorities to close NGOs not registered under the law by April 2023.**

Since 2013, the authorities have systematically responded to protests through the use of unlawful force, including lethal force; mass arrests; and the torture, enforced disappearances and unfair trials of protesters, activists, human rights defenders, lawyers and bystanders, including children.

Thirdly, torture and other ill-treatment

Torture and other ill-treatment are routine in official and unofficial places of detention by the police including the National Security Agency, particularly during periods when detainees are subjected to enforced disappearances. **Reported methods of torture include electric shocks, suspension by the limbs, indefinite solitary confinement, sexual abuse and beatings. Authorities also systematically and deliberately deny detainees adequate healthcare and hold them in inhumane conditions. No independent or effective investigations have been carried out into the causes and circumstances of dozens of suspicious deaths in custody since 2013. Authorities also subject individuals arrested on the basis of their real or perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation to invasive anal examinations**, an intentional, discriminatory and punitive practice that amounts to rape and torture.

We call on the committee to condemn these practices in the strongest terms **and to call on the Egyptian authorities to** at a minimum:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained** solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights or for reasons of discrimination on any grounds, including human rights defenders, political activists, opposition politicians, trade unionists, workers, peaceful protesters, journalists, lawyers, social media influencers, members of religious minorities, and medical professionals;
- **Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society organizations, including by amending Law No. 149/2019 on NGOs** to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards related to the right to freedom of association; close all criminal investigations into the legitimate work of human rights organizations, and lift all arbitrary travel bans and asset freezes against civil society workers; and
- **Conduct thorough, effective, impartial and independent investigations into allegations of enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and unlawful killings and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice** through fair trials without recourse to the death penalty. Those public officials reasonably suspected of committing crimes should be suspended from positions that would allow them to commit further violations, interfere in investigations or grant them immunity, pending investigations

Our written submission presents a list of recommendations to the Egyptian authorities to address these violations.

Thank you.