

# Amnesty International

## Public Statement

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### **Egypt must take immediate measures to address the systemic violations of human rights and end impunity**

#### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Egypt***

Egypt's human rights crisis demands the continued attention of the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International has said following the outcome of the country's Universal Periodic Review on 20 March.

Egypt's representative [told](#) the Council that the authorities had accepted 243 of the 300 recommendations made to them during the review – 23 of them “partially”. However, with the authorities stepping up their sweeping crackdown on dissent, Amnesty International has warned that Egypt is likely to renege on commitments to ensure fair trials, stop torture and investigate excessive force unless states at the Human Rights Council are now prepared to hold the authorities to their word.

Egypt's criminal justice system is increasingly a tool for repressing and intimidating critics and opponents of the government. Many of the young activists who led the mass demonstrations against Hosni Mubarak in 2011 are today in jail, joining thousands of alleged supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi. Over 41,000 people have been detained, indicted or sentenced as part of a sweeping crackdown on dissent, according to figures provided by human rights activists and lawyers. Amnesty International has documented grossly unfair trials, conducted with little regard for due process or individual criminal responsibility.

Amnesty International has expressed particular concern that Egypt rejected all recommendations to stop trials of civilians before military courts, despite agreeing to recommendations to respect due process and guarantee fair trials. The authorities greatly expanded the remit of military courts in October 2014 and over 3,000 civilians have faced trials before them in the last five months alone, according to recent figures from the activist group No to Military Trials. Amnesty International considers such trials to be fundamentally unfair and to breach a range of key fair trial safeguards.

Egypt also rejected all recommendations to impose a moratorium on executions and abolish the death penalty. Egypt has seen a sharp spike in death sentences over the past year, with courts sentencing 509 people to death in 2014 compared with 109 in 2013. Those condemned include leaders of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood movement as well as hundreds of alleged Morsi supporters, in an apparent purge of the political opposition. The first execution of a Morsi supporter took place in March 2015. Hundreds more are now on death row.

While Egypt accepted a recommendation to investigate excessive force by security forces, in practice it has shown no commitment to delivering inquiries that are effective, independent or impartial. Investigations by the Public Prosecution and official fact-finding committees have not delivered truth, justice or adequate reparation for victims and their families. Instead, they have whitewashed the conduct of the security forces. In particular, investigations into the deaths of hundreds of protesters at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in August 2013 failed to hold a single member of the security forces or official accountable or criminally liable. Egypt on 20

March rejected a recommendation that it launch thorough, independent and impartial investigations into the incident as “factually inaccurate”.

With no fear of being held to account for human rights violations, the security forces have continued to operate above the law. Security forces have routinely used excessive force and unnecessary lethal force to break up demonstrations. Over 1,500 people have died in and around protests since July 2013, according to Amnesty International’s monitoring.

Amnesty International has urged Egypt to act quickly to address torture and other ill-treatment, after the authorities accepted recommendations to ensure detention conditions met international standards and to bring national legislation in line with the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Torture and other ill-treatment, as well as deaths in custody, are rife in police stations and other places of detention. There have been at least 121 deaths in custody since the beginning of 2014 according to a list compiled by Egyptian human rights activists, many as a result of inadequate medical care and torture.

While Egypt accepted several recommendations to review legislation regulating NGOs, protests and public gatherings, Amnesty International has noted that the government has routinely promised reform while tightening restrictions in practice. The authorities have stated that draconian restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are intended to restore stability in the face of ongoing political unrest, as well as the security threat from armed groups. However, measures to “protect national security” or “combat terrorism” have been totally disproportionate. They have drastically shrunk the space for independent civil society and silenced critical voices, including opposition activists, journalists and human rights defenders.

Amnesty International has urged the Egyptian authorities to ensure that all measures taken in the name of security are in line with the country’s obligations under international human rights law and standards. The organization has condemned attacks by armed groups that target ordinary Egyptians, also noting that 445 security forces died at the hands of armed groups last year, according to official sources.

The authorities accepted recommendations calling on them to pass new legislation prohibiting violence against women, as well as a national action plan to tackle violence and discrimination. Amnesty International has documented systemic discrimination against women in Egypt, including violence in the public sphere, in the home and in detention. Measures taken by the authorities to address the problem have been tokenistic. The organization urges the authorities to ensure that any national strategy includes meaningful consultations with Egyptian women’s human rights defenders.

### **Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt on 20 March 2015 during its 28<sup>th</sup> session. Amnesty International had intended to deliver the statement above prior to the adoption of the review outcome; however, it did not succeed in securing a speaking slot. Earlier, Amnesty International had submitted information on the situation of human rights in Egypt:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/034/2014/en/>

Public Document

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