

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

16 February 2010  
AI Index: MDE 12/009/2010

### Universal Periodic Review: opportunity to address human rights concerns in Egypt

Ahead of the UN Human Rights Council review of Egypt's human rights record under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), taking place on 17 February, Amnesty International calls on the government to fully respect and abide by its human rights obligations and to be receptive to recommendations made by other states to address human rights violations in the country.

The interactive discussion during the UPR is an opportunity for other states to question representatives of the Egyptian government on areas of serious human rights concern. Among the most pressing which Amnesty International has documented are the use of emergency legislation to arrest and detain people without charge or trial; the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment; grossly unfair trials of civilians before military and emergency courts; restrictions on the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; the rise in death sentences; a lack of legal provisions and other measures to protect women from domestic violence; legal and other discrimination against members of religious and ethnic minorities; arrests and prosecutions of people for their actual or alleged sexual orientation; and the maltreatment of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, including through the use of excessive, including lethal force.

Amnesty International urges the Egyptian government and other states to use the opportunity presented by the UPR to address these concerns in an open and candid manner and to agree measures to improve the situation of human rights in the country.

In its report for the UPR, the Egyptian government has highlighted its "sincere desire to cooperate with the Human Rights Council" and its "efforts to promote respect for human rights". Amnesty International welcomes these sentiments and urges the Egyptian government to reflect them in practice during the UPR session and to undertake to implement recommendations made by other states during the review.

Amnesty International has previously submitted information to the UN in preparation for the review of Egypt's human rights record, including specific recommendations for addressing the most serious abuses and strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights. As well, some 36 other human rights organizations and groups of NGOs, including Egyptian NGOs, have submitted information ahead of the review process.

Among the most important recommendations made by Amnesty International are that the Egyptian authorities should ensure that any statement made as a result of torture or other ill-treatment is not accepted as evidence in any legal proceedings, except against a person accused of responsibility for acts of torture or other ill-treatment, and that this principle should be enshrined in Egyptian law. As well, Amnesty International is calling for an end to the abuses of administrative detention which have seen the authorities circumvent court orders to release

detainees by immediately issuing new administrative detention orders, and for the Egyptian authorities to ensure that all arrested persons are charged and brought before the courts within a reasonable time or released, in accordance with international human rights standards. Further, Amnesty International is calling for the introduction of legal provisions and other measures to protect women from domestic violence, including marital rape and sexual harassment, and for an end to forced evictions of communities living in informal settlements and the development of a comprehensive plan to address inadequate housing conditions which pose a risk to the lives and health of residents of informal settlements in consultation with the affected communities.

In the past, the Egyptian government has generally failed to act on recommendations made by UN human rights bodies, such as one calling for the definition of torture in the Penal Code to be amended to conform with international law and another calling for the number of capital crimes to be reduced. The Egyptian authorities have also ignored requests to visit made by the UN's Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, on torture, on freedom of religion or belief, on the independence of judges and lawyers and on the situation of human rights defenders, as well as that of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Amnesty International urges the Egyptian government to amend its policy in this regard and to undertake to consider seriously and, where appropriate, implement recommendations made by UN treaty bodies and special procedures. Further, the Egyptian authorities should issue a standing invitation to all UN human rights experts to visit Egypt and should facilitate their visits, notably that proposed by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, in order to take advantage of their expertise, advice and recommendations.

Amnesty International has urged other states to participate actively in the UPR of Egypt and to make concrete recommendations to address the serious human rights violations that continue to occur in Egypt.

## **Background**

The UPR is a unique opportunity to review the human rights record of all UN Member States once every four years and to work cooperatively with the states under review to identify measures to overcome human rights challenges and to improve the fulfilment of their human rights obligations and commitments. In this regard, it is of critical importance that the interactive dialogue in the UPR Working Group between the state under review and other member states is used well. It should focus on the main human rights challenges in the country and reviewing states should make concrete and measurable recommendations to address these and to strengthen the enjoyment of human rights by rights holders.

## **Read More**

- [Suggested recommendations to states considered in the seventh round of Universal Periodic Review, February 2010, 1 December 2009.](#)
- [Egypt: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review: seventh session of the UPR Working Group of the Human Rights Council, February 2010, 1 September 2009.](#)

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: [\*\*press@amnesty.org\*\*](mailto:press@amnesty.org)  
International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK  
[\*\*www.amnesty.org\*\*](http://www.amnesty.org)