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EGYPT: PROMINENT ITALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST BANNED FROM ENTERING EGYPT TO PARTICIPATE IN COP 27

On 10 November 2022, Egyptian authorities denied human rights defender Giorgio Caracciolo, an Italian national and Deputy Director for International Programs at DIGNITY and a member of the executive committee of EuroMed Rights, entry to Egypt and required him to leave Cairo International Airport on a flight to Paris, France. Caracciolo, who had a valid entry visa to Egypt according to an expert, was scheduled to participate in COP27, including by meeting with Egyptian human rights defenders and officials from various governments attending COP27. Egyptian authorities did not provide him with a reason for revoking his visa and denying him entry.

Caracciollo's denial of entry confirms earlier concerns about restrictions facing civil society at COP27 amidst a systematic crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. From the outset, the Egyptian government has maneuvered to sideline and silence independent civil society at COP27.

Egyptian authorities attempted to block the participation of independent Egyptian NGOs through an opaque and secretive one-off registration process for Egyptian groups to the conference. In the run-up to COP27, human rights organizations documented the arbitrary detention and interrogation of scores of people by the Supreme State Security Prosecution on the suspicion of supporting calls for peaceful protests during the conference. Egyptian environmental activists have voiced their concern that engagement with the COP27 may lead to acts of reprisals by the Egyptian authorities after the conclusion of the conference.

Through Caracciolo's leadership, DIGNITY has fought for years against Egypt's systematic practices of torture and ill-treatment.

Egypt's attacks on and marginalization of critical voices and human rights activists, including through Caracciolo's denial of entry, undermine the integrity of COP27 and impede the ability of civil society to meaningfully engage with the Conference of Parties.

We call upon States participating at COP27 to express their deep dismay at Caracciolo's denial of entry and urge the Egyptian authorities to address urgent human rights concerns, including by :

1. Ensure the right to freedom of association by closing all politically-motivated investigations into the legitimate work of NGOs, removing all restrictions on independent civil society including travel bans and asset freezes, and allowing their unimpeded participation at COP 27
2. Remove all disproportionate restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and ensure freedom of the media.
3. Amend legislation on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly to comply with Egypt's international human rights obligations, allow the full exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression during and after COP27, and instruct security forces to refrain from using unlawful force when policing protests during and after COP27.
4. Immediately and unconditionally release Alaa Abdel Fattah and others arbitrarily detained in Egypt simply for exercising their human rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

The failure of States participating at COP to urge the Egyptian authorities to address those concerns effectively encourages them to use COP27 as a means to whitewash Egypt's abominable human rights record, which will ultimately exacerbate the ongoing human rights crisis in the country.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS:

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies - CIHRS

DIGNITY - Danish Institute Against Torture

El Nadim Center Against Violence and Torture

Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Egyptian Human Rights Forum

EuroMed Rights

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH

Amnesty International

Human Rights Watch