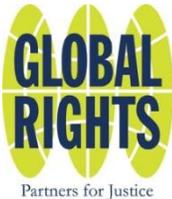




February 14, 2012



Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi  
Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces  
Cairo, Egypt



Dear Field Marshall Tantawi:



On behalf of the undersigned human rights organizations, we are writing to express our deep concern over the ongoing harassment and prosecution of civil society organizations in Egypt. We call on you to drop all charges against these organizations and their staff members, both domestic and foreign. We further call on you to adopt legislation regulating the activity of nongovernmental organizations that is in line with international standards, including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and that protects, rather than restricts, the fundamental right to freedom of association.



Jacob Blaustein Institute  
for the Advancement of Human Rights

While you have claimed that the raiding of offices, seizure of equipment and the filing of criminal charges against the staff members of respected Egyptian and international organizations is purely a legal issue being pursued through an independent judicial process, this position is not borne out by statements by the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, or Minister of Planning and International Cooperation. As you are well aware, all of the organizations under investigation have attempted to register according to Egypt's existing Law on Associations and have been engaged in activities to promote human rights and democratic reform in an open and transparent manner. Moreover, the fact that hundreds of Egyptian organizations are reportedly under investigation, many of them involved in the promotion of human rights and democracy, suggests a coordinated government campaign against the legitimate work of monitoring and advocating against government abuses of human rights.



Just one year ago, thousands of Egyptians took to Tahrir Square and to the streets throughout the country to protest decades of indignities suffered at the hands of a government that did not allow citizens to have a voice in how they are governed. Egyptians did not sacrifice their blood and lives to replace the former government with yet another one that does not respect their basic rights.



You are in a truly historic position to either help guide Egypt through transition to an open and pluralistic democracy or to prolong the mechanisms of state control that led to the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. We appeal to you to place the interests of the Egyptian people as your highest priority and to cease the campaign against civil society actors engaging in legitimate and peaceful activities to promote democracy and human rights.

We further urge you to throw out the existing Law on Associations, as well as the draft law circulated last month that contained similarly restrictive provisions regarding government oversight and the ability of organizations to receive foreign funding. Finally we urge you to work with civil society to adopt new legislation within a framework of transparency and the rule of law that will be consistent with Egypt's international obligations to uphold the right to freedom of association, including the rights of human rights defenders to cooperate with and receive financial assistance from foreign partners.

Sincerely,



Larry Cox, Interim Director of the  
Partners for Human Rights Program  
*RFK Center for Justice and Human  
Rights*



Elisa Massimino, President and CEO  
*Human Rights First*



Lucia Nader, Director  
*Conectas Human Rights*



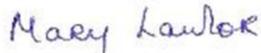
Ludmilla Alexeeva, Chair  
*Moscow Helsinki Group*



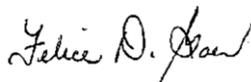
Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director  
*Amnesty International USA*



Susan Farnsworth, Executive Director  
*Global Rights*



Mary Lawlor, Director  
*FrontLine Defenders*



Felice D. Gaer, Director  
*Jacob Blaustein Institute for the  
Advancement of Human Rights*



David J. Kramer, President  
*Freedom House*

CC: His Excellency Sameh Shoukry, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt