The honourable President of the Republic  
Palais de l'Elysée  
55 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré  
75008 Paris  

Paris, 24 March 2016  

**Re: Official visit to Egypt**

Dear Mr President,

Ahead of your upcoming visit scheduled for April 2016, EuroMed Rights, OMCT and SOLIDAR wish to draw your attention to the appalling human rights situation in Egypt.

The recent forced disappearance and brutal murder of Italian researcher Giulio Regeni in Cairo is a glaring example. His body was found at the end of January with obvious signs of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. These facts are aggravated by the information that the officer in charge of investigating on the researcher’s death was previously convicted for torturing a detainee. This case only adds to the plethora of evidence showing the almost absolute impunity for such crimes in Egypt.

In 2015, the Al-Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence collected statistics from Egyptian media and reported that 474 individuals were killed and 600 were tortured by the Egyptian security forces. This is only the tip of the iceberg given that most cases are never exposed in the media. These statistics directly contradict the statements made by the Egyptian government that torture is not a common occurrence in Egypt. In fact, torture is a widespread policy nurtured by the total impunity of the Egyptian security forces and the approval of the highest levels of government. The politicisation of the judiciary and the lack of implementation of human rights, including those enshrined in the constitution, only encourage this vicious cycle. The latest evidence is that on Saturday 14 February the Supreme Court invalidated the only conviction made since the summer of 2013 against a police officer accused of using illegal force.

Egypt is experiencing a general context of severe repression against all protest movements, aimed, among others, at independent civil society organisations. The law on associations of 2002 currently in force enables the government to close down such associations at will, to confiscate their property, reject the individuals appointed to their Boards of Directors and to block their funding from foreign sources. The November 2013 adoption of ‘protest law’ also led to hundreds of arrests and convictions of emblematic dissenting figures for having organised gatherings that were considered illegal. In September 2014, President Sisi amended the Criminal Code in order to increase the penalty for receiving foreign funds with the intention of "undermining the national interest". Faced with the international outcry against the measures adopted, the government reversed its decision to close down all organisations conducting activities relating to civil society without being registered and returned to the use of less visible techniques of intimidation and harassment of individuals and their organisations. At least twenty human rights defenders were banned...
from travelling outside the country. In general, the human rights defenders are constantly harassed and prosecuted for peacefully exercising their activities. The most blatant of those cases is the inquiry into foreign funding 173 of 2011, which has already led to the closure of five international organisations and of which the investigations targeting Egyptian organisations are still ongoing.

In accordance with resolution 2016/2608 of the European Parliament on Egypt adopted on 10 March, we ask you to urge your Egyptian counterparts to stop the practices that violate Egypt's obligations under international human rights law, as well as the Egyptian constitution of 2014. In particular, we ask you to respect the Common Position 2008/944/PESC of the European Union defining the common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment and the conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 21 August 2013. On this basis, we urge you to suspend all exports of arms and security equipment to Egypt, as well as any contract currently under negotiation, until the country's authorities cease their violent repression against the movements of defence of human rights and peaceful dissenting movements.

We also urge you to bring the following demands to the Egyptian authorities:

- Conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the murder of Giulio Regeni, the results of which must be made public;
- Ensure that detention facilities, including police stations and unofficial places of detention, are placed under the control of the judiciary and respect international human rights law, including the United Nations Convention on Torture, of which Egypt is a signatory, and all of the minimum rules of the United Nations on the treatment of prisoners;
- Cease the harassment against human rights defenders by lifting the travel bans levelled against them and by stopping prosecutions relating to the peaceful exercise of their legitimate activities, including the prosecution for foreign funding (case n°173 of 2011). This applies also to defenders of workers’ rights and independent trade unions;
- Adopt an law on associations in accordance with international human rights law following a real dialogue with the relevant partners;
- Repeal law n°107/2003 of November 2013 which severely restricts the right to peaceful assembly, or modify it in order to bring it into line with international human rights law and the Egyptian constitution;
- Amend article 126 of the Egyptian penal code regulating torture to bring it in line with the convention against torture;
- Free all individuals imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and assembly.
- Respect the right to strike, and ensure the implementation of constitutional provisions (art.15, 75 and 76 of 2014 constitution), and the legal obligations enshrined in the core ILO conventions: n°87 and 98.

We remain at your disposal to provide any further information you may require.

Yours faithfully,

Michel Tubiana, Gerald Staberock, Conny Reuter
EuroMed Rights President Secretary General OMCT Secretary General SOLIDAR