

Human Rights Council 43rd session

ITEM 4 – GENERAL DEBATE

Speaker: Michael Ineichen

Thank you Madame President.

The failure of the Council to hold the government of Egypt to account is contributing to the ongoing *systematic and grave human rights* violations in Egypt, including against human rights defenders.

Human rights lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, who was arrested from Cairo airport while travelling to Geneva to meet the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. In November he was awaiting release after the court dismissed the charges against him, but was then [charged](#) with identical charges and kept in detention. The practice of “[recycling](#)” cases against activists is being widely reported.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [indicated](#) that arbitrary detention is a systematic problem in Egypt and could constitute crimes against humanity. *In a joint letter*, seven UN experts [highlighted](#) the collective and corrosive effects of Egypt’s counter-terrorism laws and practices on *the promotion and protection of human rights*.

ISHR urges States to initiate swift and effective Council action to address the deteriorating *human rights* situation in Egypt.

Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, women human rights defenders remain imprisoned for their activism while those who were provisionally released are still facing charges. To date, no one has been held accountable for their torture and arbitrary detention.

Saudi Arabia has failed to immediately release defenders and to implement the calls made by the Council *through the joint* statements, delivered by Iceland and Australia in 2019.

We therefore urge States to ensure sustained attention by the Council by jointly reiterating calls on the Saudi government to implement the benchmarks laid out in the two joint statements. We also call on the Council to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism to address the situation of *grave systematic and widespread human rights violations in Saudi Arabia*.

Thank you.