

Human Rights Council 43rd session

ITEM 6 - ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF EGYPT

12 March 2020

Speaker: Kareem Taha

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President

This is a joint statement by the International Service for Human Rights and the Egyptian Front for Human Rights.

My name is Kareem, I was previously arrested because I participated in a protest, I was detained for 6 months in which I was subjected to physical and psychological torture. Additionally, I was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for participating in my friend's funeral, who was a journalist that was killed while covering a protest.

We recall that no one has been held accountable for my torture, ill-treatment, and that of other human rights defenders. In this regard, we welcome the government's acceptance to make public the measures taken to implement recommendations of the confidential inquiry of the Committee against Torture and urge the government to swiftly report to the Council on the measures taken in this regard.

Egypt claims that some recommendations are 'accepted and already implemented'. This is deceptive and does not reflect the reality documented by civil society, UN experts, and the UN Secretary-General in his annual reports on reprisals and intimidation for engagement with the UN.

For example, Egypt claimed to have implemented recommendations on: guaranteeing the rights of human rights defenders, their protection from reprisals, investigating and punishing attacks against them, guaranteeing freedom of expression and of the press online and offline, freedom of peaceful assembly, association and preventing the use of terrorism laws to limit rights.

We recall the reprisals against those who cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing during her visit to Egypt in 2018. No visits have taken place since then. We recall that human rights defenders are still in prison due to their engagement with the UN. We recall that our colleagues could not travel to participate in the UPR due to the travel bans they're facing and charges that could lead up to 25 years imprisonment.

Egypt regularly urges cooperation and dialogue, its approach to the UPR was anything but. Its categorical rejection of recommendations calling for the release of all those detained for exercising their rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression and to stop restricting and criminalizing the work of human rights defenders, is a clear example.

The government also refused all recommendations related to the abolition of the death penalty, issuing a standing invitation, and accepting pending visits requests of Special Procedures including on human rights defenders and torture.