Vote Yes to Human Rights, No to Oppression: Civil Society Calls to Reject Egypt's Candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council (2026-2028)

Joint Statements · Egypt · 11 September 2025

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, urge all UN member states to refrain from voting for Egypt in the upcoming elections to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) for the 2026–2028 term.

Membership in the Human Rights Council comes with a solemn responsibility to uphold the highest standards of international human rights and strengthen the UN human rights system. Defying this responsibility, the Egyptian government has used past membership to evade accountability by denying grave and widespread human rights violations it has committed, while simultaneously violating universal human rights standards.

On the national level, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, and restrictions on expression, association, and assembly remain endemic, as shown by the UN Human Rights Committee and the UN Committee Against Torture. Indicators on the rule of law and justice are in freefall.

Egypt is continuously one of the top 10 jailers of journalists globally with 17 journalists behind bars in 2025. It has also continued to repress civil society and human rights defenders, subjecting them to reprisals, including intimidation and prolonged detention for engaging with UN mechanisms. The authorities refuse to cooperate meaningfully with Special Procedures, rejecting or ignoring requests for country visits and failing to provide substantive responses to communications. Furthermore, Egypt has outstanding reports with treaty bodies and has not ratified or accepted individual complaint mechanisms.

During its fourth Universal Periodic Review in July 2025, Egypt received 343 recommendations from UN member states spanning civil, political, social, economic rights, justice and redress. Yet Egypt only committed to take practical steps in relation to 5 recommendations, a mere 1.4 % of the total. In 134 cases, Egypt responded by "noting" a recommendation but refusing to commit to any concrete or measurable action, including with regard to calls to release political prisoners or halt arbitrary detention. It likewise rejected or omitted response to recommendations calling for an end to violence and discrimination against women, minorities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. The government also ignored recommendations to take action to ensure accountability for widespread and systematic torture, including in relation to the murder of Italian citizen Giulio Regeni.

Despite years of constructive engagement attempts, training, and technical assistance by the UN,

the human rights environment in Egypt is worsening. In this regard, we reiterate the call for the creation of an independent international monitoring and investigative mechanism on human rights violations in Egypt. Such a body should be empowered to document gross violations, report to the UN, and support accountability efforts for such violations.

Rewarding the Egyptian government with a seat on the Human Rights Council will only encourage Egypt to further its widespread violations, ignore calls for reform and accountability and undermine the universality of human rights. The international community must act decisively and refuse to vote for Egypt in the upcoming Human Rights Council elections.

Signatories:

- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Cedar Centre for Legal Studies
- CIVICUS – Vuka Coalition
- Committee for Justice
- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
- Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms
- Egyptian Front for Human Rights
- Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- EgyptWide for Human Rights
- Espacio Público
- EuroMed Rights Network
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Karapatan Alliance Philippines
- MENA Rights Group
- Nouvelle Dynamique de la Société Civile en RD Congo (NDSCI)
- Organisation Tchadienne Anti-Corruption
- PEN America

- REDRESS
- Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l’Observation et le Suivi des Élections en Guinée (ROSE)
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
- Skyline International for Human Rights
- West African Human Rights Defenders’ Network
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

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