



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

Dear Secretary Kerry,

I am writing to you to urge the United States Government to immediately intervene with the Egyptian authorities to stop the ongoing investigation of independent human rights organizations in relation to the legitimate exercise of their activities. In particular, the recent imposition of travel bans, asset freezes, and interrogation of the staff of these organizations by investigative judges must end. Continuation of these actions will likely result in the closure of organizations doing incredibly important work to promote human rights in Egypt.

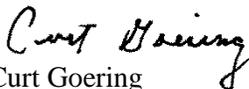
In the last six weeks, Egyptian authorities have targeted six credible, independent human organizations: The Arab Network for Human Rights Information, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Nazra for Feminist Studies, The Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, and United Group. Many more are at risk for prosecution and other forms of intimidation.

Sadly, this kind of action is part of a disturbing trend that the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and its partners in Egypt have been grappling with since 2014. Until August 2015, CVT worked directly with a number of very courageous human rights organizations in Egypt. While these organizations had already determined that advocating for civil and political rights was too dangerous and instead focused on social, economic and cultural rights, the Egyptian authorities deemed this work a threat as well. In one instance, the Egyptian authorities terminated a workshop in which activists were discussing how to advocate for a cleaner Nile River. Incidents like this one generated serious safety and security concerns for participants in CVT activities. CVT has since pulled back on the in-person activities it carries out in Egypt.

I know you agree that a vibrant, active civil society advocating that its government respect human rights and the rule of law represents one of the most critical elements of a strong democracy. Until independent human rights organizations in Egypt are able to do their work without fear of punishment, human rights abuses will continue. CVT will remain concerned with this situation until it is fully solved.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,


Curt Goering
Executive Director
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cc: Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary for Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor