

PRESS RELEASE – THE OBSERVATORY

EGYPT: Release of human rights defenders but serious concerns about their safety

Paris-Geneva, February 9, 2011. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), welcomes the release of the 30 human rights defenders but remains concerned for the safety of human rights defenders in Egypt.

The human rights defenders arbitrarily arrested by the military police on February 3, 2011, at the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights by the military police¹ were all released without charge between February 4 and 6, 2011, after having been detained incommunicado at Camp 75.

The group included members of the Hisham Mubarak Law Center, the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, the Front for the Defence of Egyptian Protesters (FDP) - which provides support to protesters - Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and journalists. The Observatory welcomes the release of these human rights defenders and thanks all the persons, institutions and organisations who intervened in their favour.

However, according to the information received, during their custody, the group of defenders were harassed by officials of the military intelligence to push them to stop their support of protesters and leave the Square Tahrir. Some of the persons detained have reportedly been victims of ill-treatments. Furthermore, cell phones, cameras and computers seized by the military police in the offices of the two organisations were destroyed.

The Observatory remains concerned for the security of the whole community of human rights defenders in Egypt, in particular on February 6, 2011, two army officers visited the offices of the Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence with the intent to search the premises.

The Observatory urges the Egyptian authorities to refrain from any act of intimidation, attack or other act impeding the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and reiterate its call for an immediate and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts.

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¹ See Joint Press release of the Observatory and EMHRN, February 3, 2011, and the Observatory's Press release, February 4, 2011.