



WORLD ORGANISATION AGAINST TORTURE

PRESS RELEASE

EGYPT: Violent repression of peaceful demonstrations

Geneva, 28 January 2011. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) condemns the excessive use of force and violence against the protests that have started on 25 January 2011 in different governorates to denounce poverty, corruption and police brutality, which led to the death of at least seven protesters and one policeman, leaving hundreds injured and about one thousand protesters arrested¹.

According to the information received, security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the largely peaceful demonstrations and batons, clubs and sticks to beat the protesters. OMCT is also gravely concerned about the safety of those arrested and recalls to the competent authorities of Egypt that they are legally bound to effectively ensure the physical and psychological integrity of all persons deprived of liberty in accordance with international and regional human rights law, and in particular the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights to which Egypt is a State party.

OMCT is also concerned about the blocking of social networks and several Egyptian media websites, which are used by activists, journalists and bloggers, including human rights defenders, to exchange information and provide information on the demonstrations². The Egyptian authorities have for years used the emergency powers to severely curtail freedom of assembly and to crackdown on peaceful opposition protests.

OMCT calls on the Egyptian authorities to

- Immediately put an end to the continued repression of the peaceful protests and issue clear instructions to the security forces to refrain from using excessive force against the protesters in accordance with international standards, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials;
- Guarantee freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression;
- Immediately release all those who were detained while peacefully demonstrating and immediately cease torture and ill-treatment;
- Carry out prompt, effective, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into the police abuses and violence, the results of which must be made public, in order to bring those responsible before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal and to apply penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law; and provide the victims with adequate compensation, reparation and rehabilitation;
- Establish, in close cooperation with the people directly concerned and their representatives, programmes for social, economic and cultural development that effectively respond to the needs of the people of Egypt ;
- Ensure the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the country in accordance with national laws and international human rights standards.

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¹ According to information received from the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR), a member of OMCT SOS-Torture Network, 1120 individuals were detained from 25 January till 27 January 2011 in 9 governorates (Cairo, Suez, Alexandria, Dakahlia, Gharbia, Northern Sinai, Ismailia, Fioum, Assiut). See EOHR press released diffused on 27 January 2011.

² See The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of OMCT - FIDH, urgent appeal EGY 001 / 0111 / OBS 009.