



THE EGYPTIAN NATIONAL ACTION GROUP

ENAG

"I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it"

"We are the Egyptian National Action Group (ENAG) and this is our monthly Brief. Every month, we provide policy makers, academics, activists and journalists with an executive summary on Egyptian affairs along with our position on key topics"

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BRIEF 2

About the Egyptian National Action Group (ENAG)

The Egyptian National Action Group was launched in December 2019 by **Egyptian political opponents to the Sisi regime of all ideological trends**. It was formed in light of the publication of a **consensus document** developed by most figures of the opposition on the principles and priorities of Egypt's future governance along with a priority list of actions.

The Egypt National Action Group lives by the **values of the Arab Spring**: human dignity, freedom, equality and democracy. Our political differences – we are liberals, leftists, Islamists – are of no importance compared to our common goal which is to set Egypt free.

The Egypt National Action Group believes that **the state of Egypt is on the brink of collapse**.

In full alignment with the consensus document released in December 2019, we agree with the necessity of the removal of the current regime and the release of all political prisoners. We call for:

- **a democratic civil state protected by the rule of law and the independence of the executive, legislative and judicial powers**
- **an enhanced protection of minorities**
- **the full implementation of international laws and covenants for the respect of human rights**
- **the freedom of association and the freedom of speech**
- **the non-interference of any religious institutions in the State affairs and the independence of religious institutions**
- **gender equality and the fight of all type of violence against women**
- **a reconciliation process based on transitional justice**
- **the preservation of the nation's independence.**

This is our view on

The “Deal” of the century

In a statement on 29/01/2020, ENAG condemned the “**Theft of the Century**” which amounts to legalizing illegal settlements, seizing Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites and denying Palestinians of their rights to sovereignty.

In the same statement and in a letter sent to European leaders, ENAG warns of further destabilization threats in the whole region including Egypt. With a **\$9bn reward included in the US-Israel plan, it seems now certain that Sisi intends to give away Egypt’s sovereignty on Northern Sinai in a tragic move closer towards the [Gaza-Sinai New State Solution](#)**. There is a growing body of evidence that supports the belief that Sisi is preparing Northern Sinai to the “Deal of the century” with **mass eviction of local population** and [mass destruction of homes and farmland buildings](#).

Although this waiver of Egyptian territory might be disguised under some form of “economic special zone”, the result is the same and is **utterly unacceptable for both Palestinians and Egyptians, including in the army’s ranks**. Beyond the fundamental national sovereignty threat, this situation will result in major security threats and instability in Sinai but also in the rest of Egypt, including among the junta.

11th of February 2011

11th of February marked **the 9th anniversary of Mubarak’s ouster** from power. On this occasion, ENAG celebrated the Egyptian people’s will for a better future and recalled **how unexpected this change** of regime had been a few days before. Mentioning the **obstacles erected by the military** and the mistakes that were made by all trends among the Revolution’s supporters, ENAG members expressed their confidence that **the Egyptian nation will rise up again against the dictatorship and will succeed in building a free, democratic and sovereign Egypt**.

In brief

28 year-old human rights activist Patrick Zaky arrested

A **Bologna University Egyptian student** and human rights activist, [Patrick George Zaky](#), was arrested on 7th of February after he landed in Cairo for a short holiday break. Patrick Zaky told his lawyers he was **beaten and tortured with electroshocks**. He has been charged with “*spreading fake news and disturbing security and social peace*” for previous Facebook posts.

His arrest has provoked a **massive outrage among the Italian population** as Zaky’s arrest sounds like a painful reminder of Italian student Giulio Regeni’s murder in Egypt. Students have organized protests in several cities of Europe, remarkably **assembling thousands to ask for his immediate release**. A [petition](#) has gathered **close to 200,000 signatures** for his release and **Giulio Regeni’s parents** have joined their [voice](#) to the battle to free the human rights defender.

Egyptian Embassy in Canada attempts to censor a movie on the repression

The Egyptian Embassy in Ottawa has attempted to **prevent the movie screening of *El Hatk*** (The Assault). The [movie](#), directed by **former prisoner Mohamed El Bahrawy**, depicts life under Sisi’s dictatorship. Both Imagine Cinemas’ Ottawa St Laurent shopping centre theater’s staff and [head office](#) received **pressures from the Egyptian Embassy** but fortunately refused to proceed.

The film, produced independently, has previously been screened in several theaters in Canada, Turkey, France and the UK. It will be screened in Vienna, Austria and in Toronto, Canada, on 7th of March, in Washington DC, USA on

12th of March. Further dates will be given for screening in the US (New York and Chicago), Marseille (France) and Italy.

German celebrities stand up against Sisi

The [awarding of the Order of Saint-George](#) to Egyptian ruler Sisi on 26th January by the German Opera Ball association's director Hans Frey, has provoked an **unprecedented backlash**.

Several German celebrities refused to participate in the Dresden's Semper Opera Ball's Awards Ceremony early February in disagreement with Sisi's awarding. This backlash pushed the Opera Ball's **director Hans Frey to apologise** and the **award to be withdrawn**. Billionaire Dietmar Hopp who was to be awarded the same medal had turned down the award in protest against Sisi's crackdown on human rights.

This backlash is the sign of a **growing awareness of Sisi's repression** among the international public opinion, with apolitical individuals who have decided to **uncompromisingly reject Sisi's methods**.

The EU and the French and German governments respond to our letters

The EU External Action Services responded to a letter sent by Dr Ayman Nour to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **Josep Borrell** last December where he raised the cases of the **200 Egyptian female political prisoners detained in Egypt**, highlighting the case of critically ill **Aisha al-Shater**.

The EU response assured that the rights of political prisoners were "*integral part*" of their dialogue with Egypt. The EU also mentioned that in September 2019, at the UN Human Rights Council, it called on Egypt to "*respect freedom of expression, assembly and association and to stop unduly restricting space for civil society, including through asset freezes, travel bans, long periods of pre-trial detention and a growing number of arrests especially since June [2019]*".

As for France and Germany, they answered our letter sent in January 2020 asking for their urgent intervention in support to **the mass hunger strike undertaken by 300 political prisoners after the deaths of several inmates**. They ensured that they were following the human rights situation closely.

ENAG regularly sends letters to European leaders and lawmakers to update them on the human rights and political situation of Egypt.

66 French parliamentarians petition for the release of political prisoners

On 31st of January, **66 French MPs and MEPs** released an [op-ed in Le Monde](#) calling for **the release of human rights defenders** unjustly detained in Egypt. They particularly mentioned the case of **Ramy Shaath** who was arrested on 5th of July 2019 and whose pre-trial detention has been constantly renewed since. His wife, **Cécile Lebrun-Shaath**, was expelled from Egypt and has been since relentlessly advocating for his release. They criticized the "*deafening silence*" from the Egyptian authorities on this matter.

Ex Egyptian Minister of Solidarity appointed as Director General of the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV)

It is under Mrs **Ghada Waly** that highly **repressive NGO laws were adopted in 2014, 2017 and 2019**, imposing numerous restrictions on NGOs, granting authorities to revoke them for unclear motives, skipping any Court order obligation as stipulated by the Constitution. These laws are in breach with Egypt's obligations laid out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In October 2016, the **United Nations Rapporteur** on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Mr Maina Kiai expressed his concern about the then draft NGO bill saying it would “*aggravate already constraining legislative framework and raise further questions about compatibility of the Egyptian legislation with its international human rights obligations*”.

In June 2017, after the 2017 law had been adopted, **UN Human Rights Commissioner** Mr Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein stated that the law “*places such tight restrictions on civil society that it effectively hands administration of NGOs to the Government*”.

In statements from July 2019, **Human Rights Watch** denounced the 2019 NGO law which “*renews draconian restrictions*” whilst **Amnesty International** said it would “*help perpetuate the devastating crackdown on human rights defenders and independent civil society organizations*”.

Watch for

Patrick Zaky’s hearing

On 12th of February, the President of the EU Parliament, **David Sassoli**, called the Egyptian authorities to [release Patrick Zaky](#) and liaised with High Representative **Joseph Borrell** to highlight it at the following **Foreign Affairs Council** which took place on 17th in Brussels. However, according to the Outcome documents [available on the European Commission’s website](#), Patrick’s case has not been discussed at all by European Foreign Affairs Ministers. **Luigi di Maio**, Italian Foreign Affairs Minister attended the Council.

On **22nd of February**, a hearing will decide to release or prolong his detention which might show whether Egypt is ready to listen to its partners.

French Arms Export under scrutiny

In November 2019, **French National Assembly Information Mission on arms export** organised closed hearings with a series of stakeholders, from industrials to NGOs. According to our information, their report should be finalised by the end of February. At stake, the lack of transparency and accountability on French arms export.

Read

An “unwelcome visitor”: The Times editorial

On 20th of January, the UK held its first **UK Africa Summit** and invited Sisi to give one of the opening speeches, **a week after the death in detention of the US-Egyptian dual citizen Moustafa Kassem**. The Times issued a [remarkable editorial](#) calling Sisi an “unwelcome visitor”.

Why did Egyptian Democratization fail?

The **Project on Middle East Democracy** (POMED) asked **14 experts** to [answer the question](#) “*why did Egyptian Democratization fail?*”. Most pointed out to the role of the “*deep state*” which was not ready to leave power as shown by Sisi’s military coup in July 2013 and to the *lack of preparation of the opposition*. This is why ENAG was created.

