

To Permanent Representatives of Human Rights Council Member States

Geneva, 3 February 2011

Excellency,

We are writing to express our grave concern with the current situation in the Arab Republic of Egypt resulting from the popular uprising in the country and the subsequent crackdown against these public protests that began on the 25th of January, 2011. The Egyptian government has responded to protests with wide-spread and serious human rights violations. Yesterday, on the 2 February, pro-government demonstrators mounted an organized assault on demonstrators in which hundreds were injured and journalists were targeted in particular.

In her statement of the 1 February, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stated that "Casualties [in Egypt] have been mounting on a daily basis, with unconfirmed reports suggesting as many as 300 people may have been killed so far, more than 3,000 injured and hundreds arrested." Moreover, the High Commissioner observed that, "Egypt's longer-term record on human rights is a key factor in the protests...The population appears to be clearly rejecting a system that has deprived people of fundamental rights, and has committed a range of serious abuses, including widespread acts of torture." In response to an unprecedented national black-out on communication technologies she also called on the Government "to stop interfering with communications, internet and transport systems," and respect freedom of expression, assembly and free-movement. On 1 February, almost 100 civil society organizations from around the world distributed an *Urgent Appeal* for the international community to seriously address the human rights violations in Egypt.

With the strong risk that escalating repression, violence and instability in Egypt could lead to an unprecedented deterioration in the human rights situation in the coming days, it is critical that the international community take up this issue. We urge the UN Human Rights Council to urgently convene a Special Session on the "human rights situation in the Arab Republic of Egypt." The Human Rights Council should use the Special Session to foster concrete measures to prevent further violations of international human rights and protect those already suffering from such violations.

The Human Rights Council has a duty to "address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations thereon." The Council is also required to contribute to the prevention of human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies. The failure of the Human Rights Council to respond appropriately to the situation in Egypt would be a grave and tragic abdication of responsibility by the Council membership.

We urge your Government to call for and support the holding of a Special Session on this critical situation. We remain at your disposal for any further information on the events unfolding.

Yours Sincerely,

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

The African Democracy Forum

Amnesty International

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Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

The Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

The Carter Center (USA)

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales- CELS (Argentina)

Commonwealth human Rights Initiative

Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)

Democracy Coalition Project (DCP)

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)

East and Horn of African Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

Fondation Humanus (Cameroon)

Freedom House

Human Rights Agenda (Nigeria)

Human Rights First

Human Rights First Society (Saudi Arabia)

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Institute for Asian Democracy

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Legal Resources Consortium (Nigeria)

Partnership for Justice (Nigeria)

Physicians for Human Rights

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (USA)

West African Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN)