



**The Law Society  
of England and Wales**



The Tahrir Institute  
for Middle East Policy

Organization: Lawyers for Lawyers  
Item: 6 – UPR Outcome Egypt  
Date: 12 March 2020  
Speaker: Ms. Helene Santos

**Oral Statement to the 43st Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers for Lawyers, The Law Society of England and Wales (“Law Society”), the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute, NGOs in special consultative status and The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy**

**Re: Attacks on lawyers and human rights defenders in Egypt**

Mr. President,

We welcome the decision of Egypt to accept<sup>i</sup> some of the recommendations related to the protection of human rights defenders and lawyers, made at its 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR. We call on Egypt to effectively implement these recommendations<sup>ii</sup> without delay.

In countries where lawyers and human rights defenders are imprisoned for defending rights and where judicial independence is lacking, there is no access to justice or rule of law.

In Egypt, lawyers and human rights defenders are being disappeared, arrested and prosecuted, harassed and threatened. Their legitimate work is being criminalised through application of the Penal Code, Counter-terrorism Law, NGO Law, and other laws.

Since September 2019, and amid widespread arrests in the wake of anti-government protests, at least 20 lawyers have been arrested and detained.

An increase in prolonged pre-trial detention, the use of mass trials, and the application of the death penalty continue; constitutional amendments interfering with judicial and prosecutorial independence entrench these phenomena even further.

We urge Council to:

1. Insist on the immediate release by Egypt of all lawyers and human rights defenders who are being prosecuted for doing their work.
2. Monitor the application - and call for the amendment - of the NGO Law, Counter-terrorism Law, Penal Code, and other laws that violate rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly.
3. Monitor the application - and call for the repeal - of constitutional provisions interfering with judicial and prosecutorial independence.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>i</sup> Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt, Addendum: Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, 9 March 2020, A/HRC/43/16/Add.1

<sup>ii</sup> Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt, 27 December 2019, A/HRC/43/16.  
Supported recommendations:

31.202 Create a safe and enabling environment for the operation of civil society and human rights defenders, facilitate their work and protect them against harassment and intimidation (Afghanistan);

31.205 Effectively protect human rights defenders against intimidation or reprisals, including guaranteeing the right to unhindered access to international and regional human rights mechanisms (Denmark);

31.207 Allow human rights defenders and all other civil society actors to exercise freedom of expression and their professions without fear of being persecuted, intimidated or detained (Finland);