

Your Excellency,

The asset freezes have been ordered by judges overseeing a criminal investigation into the activities and funding of Egyptian human rights organizations, in a case officially known as Case 173 of 2011.

This year, the judges have frozen the assets of seven human rights defenders and at least 12 human rights defenders have been barred from travelling abroad. The moves have raised fears that the authorities are preparing to put human rights defenders on trial on charges such as operating unregistered organizations, accepting funding without government permission and damaging Egypt's "national interests." President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is also expected to sign a bill to replace the existing associations law. If passed, it would force human rights groups to seek official approval to conduct field research, publish their findings and seek funding.

Therefore, I call on you to close the politically motivated Case 173 of 2011 and end the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, including through arbitrary arrests, interrogations, travel bans, asset freeze and closure orders, and trumped-up charges.

At the same time, I call on you to ensure that the asset freezes imposed on human rights defenders and organizations, in relation to Case 173 of 2011, are immediately lifted.

I, further, call on you to reject the new NGO bill, because it contravenes Egypt's 2014 constitution, as well as international law and standards on the right to freedom of association.

Thank you for your attention to the above.

Sincerely yours,